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On Sacrifice; the Atonement, Vicarious Oblation, and  
Example of Christ; and the Punishment of Sin.

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## FIVE SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,

MARCH, 1856.

BY

B. MORGAN COWIE, B.D.

LATE HULSEAN LECTURER, AND LATE FELLOW OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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TO  
THE REVEREND GEORGE ELWES CORRIE, D.D.  
MASTER OF JESUS COLLEGE,  
AND FORMERLY NORRISIAN PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY  
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,  
*These Sermons*  
ARE, BY HIS PERMISSION,  
DEDICATED  
BY  
THE SELECT PREACHER.  
NOMINATED TO THAT OFFICE FROM HIS COLLEGE,  
WITH SINCERE RESPECT.

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## PREFACE.

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THE Sermons which are here presented to the public have no pretension to originality in the way of argument. I have had in view the words of Dr Veysie (Bampton Lectures, 1795), "It would be as difficult as it is unnecessary, to advance anything new upon a subject which has been so often and so ably discussed. In investigating any point of Christian doctrine all that can now be expected, and perhaps all that ought to be attempted, is to state with accuracy and precision what the true faith is, and having selected the best arguments in its defence, to arrange them in the clearest order, and to place them in the most striking point of view; if either new objections have been raised, or old ones revived, to oppose them with vigour and authority, but with temper and moderation." I have therefore endeavoured to reproduce those arguments which seemed to me to bear most closely on the more important parts of the subject, and to place them before my audience in the most forcible manner.

I have not given any references for several reasons:—first, because I wished not to burden my pages with notes which would make the book more expensive, and I wished this to be more *ad populum*

than *ad clerum* ; secondly, because I hope to do this more fully in a treatise on the subject which I am preparing for the use of Students in Theology ; and thirdly, because when the names of authors are given, we find that men too often “test the testifiers,” accepting an argument from favour, or rejecting it from prejudice. As the object of these Sermons is rather to reassure those whose faith in vital Christian doctrines may be shaken than to present a scientific treatise to a student, it seemed to me advisable not to run the risk of the judgment being thus warped. Those who are acquainted with the theological literature of the subject, will easily recognise the materials of which use has been made. Having disclaimed any pretence to originality, and having promised to give full references hereafter, I trust I shall not be liable to any charge of unacknowledged plagiarism. My only object has been to select and rearrange ; and the Sermons are presented to the public because I wished that it should be known that a humble attempt had been made in my own University to uphold important doctrines which have been called in question in recent publications.

B. M. C.

STOKE HOUSE,  
STOKE D'ABERNON, SURREY.

# SERMON I.

## SACRIFICE, A DIVINE EXPIATORY RITE.

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GENESIS IV. 3, 4.

*“ In process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof.”*

NO more important subject can be proposed for the meditations of a Christian assembly than the method of salvation. The object of the Divine mission of our Lord Jesus Christ being to save sinners, and to bring life and immortality to light through His Gospel, it is of primary importance that we understand rightly and distinctly what He did for us, and the duties which are consequently incumbent on us. In the language of the Apostle, writing to the Hebrews, we understand that He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and from the sacred records generally it has been concluded, that His life was to be our example, and His death our ransom.

The former part of this truth is easily understood and universally received, but the latter, though taught with sufficient clearness, it might be supposed, in the pages of the revealed word, is not so easily and readily assented to. That Christ's death was a sacrifice, is a proposition that must be received in words, being plainly asserted; but when we come to sift and analyse the meaning of the word “sacrifice,” and the sense in which Christ is “our sacrifice,” we find that

men have wandered in every direction from each other.

In discoursing at this time on some of the most interesting parts of a subject so suitable to the season when the Church calls us to the duties of penitence, self-examination, and meditation on the passion and death of Christ, it will be quite unnecessary to refer to modern statements, though they are neither few nor uniform. In all their multitude and variety I have found nothing new, nothing that has not been examined and discussed repeatedly. The very same views which now attract attention by their supposed novelty or daring, or are admired by some for their supposed progressive character, have been held and maintained, with certainly not *less* ability, by writers now beyond the reach of controversy; and we therefore can discuss the teaching of holy Scripture on such questions as may present themselves in this matter, without fear of giving pain to individuals, or appearing to be partizans of modern theological schools; but calmly reviewing the statements and arguments of those who in former days have applied themselves, on one side or the other, to the great questions belonging to the subjects of the atonement, of sacrifice, and of the doctrine of sin.

A complete and systematic inquiry into the subject would require that we should begin with the origin and object of sacrifice generally, which would also include the doctrine of sin; that we should then ascertain what was the efficacy of those sacrifices which in the Jewish religion were propounded as types of the sacrifice of Christ; that we should carefully consider how the New Testament writers speak of the sacrificial death of Christ; and how far it is

reasonable to impute to them the accommodation of their ideas to Jewish prejudices, and what we may conclude as to the subjective meaning of any of those expressions which we may reasonably conclude that, like Moses, they delivered, having regard to the *hardness of men's hearts*, and seeing they were *dull of hearing*. As we are able to arrive at settled conclusions on these points, we should see the true Scriptural doctrine of the atonement either freed from the difficulties with which men have invested it, or clearly demanding the submission of man's subtle intellect to a deep and mysterious truth of the mystery of godliness. It will not be my object in preaching before the University at this time, to attempt to follow out this inquiry in regular order. I rather wish to engage your attention to some points or branches of the subject, which may lead to reflections of a practical kind, and help towards our having distinct ideas on doctrines of the most vital importance in the Christian faith.

Of the origin of sacrifice, different opinions have been held as far back as we can reach. Some have thought that there must from the beginning have been a special command of God, which enjoined upon mankind the offering of animal sacrifices, and by which they were instructed in the intention and efficacy of such offerings; and others have thought that the custom arose from the spontaneous emotions of men anxious to testify their gratitude, or deprecate the supposed displeasure of an offended Deity. To make positive assertions on so difficult a subject would be unwise, since holy Scripture has not spoken decisively, and it seems both uncharitable and unchristian to make the holding of fixed opinion on



such a subject a condition of communion, when the earlier Christian writers, whom we venerate as fathers in the Church, have held opinions widely different.

The arguments used by those who consider sacrifice to be of human origin, are such as these: that there is no express command recorded; that the animal sacrifice was not accepted in the case of Abel, nor the offering of fruits rejected in the case of Cain, for the *matter* of the offering, but for the temper and disposition of the offerer; that it was natural when the idea of offering was once conceived, that every one should offer of the best he had; that if there had been an express command of animal sacrifice, it is not likely that Cain would have neglected it, and offered instead thereof an uncommanded offering; that many Jewish as well as early Christian writers have assumed the human origin of sacrifice, and that the universal prevalence of the rite, may be considered quite as reasonably as pointing to the notion that man invented sacrifice, as to the notion of a universal tradition.

On the other hand it is urged, that even if it were natural to suppose that an offering of the best of our possessions should be made to God, the putting to death of innocent animals could not be supposed to be pleasing to the Lord of creation; that the promise of a deliverer by means of *one* who should struggle with the evil power and prevail, and who is said to be "*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,*" having been revealed to man, a commemoration of the truth was very likely to have been appointed to be made, and since this animal sacrifice was afterwards declared to be a type by Divine authority, its acceptance at the very threshold

of the history of mankind, makes us conclude that it must have been commanded.

The obscurity and brevity of the account in Genesis, of the comparative favour shewn to the sacrifices of Cain and Abel, make it difficult to ascertain why one was refused and the other accepted, no law of sacrifice being presumed. The disposition of the men would seem rather to be developed from the circumstance of the different reception given to their offerings, if we look no further than the mere facts; but the Apostle, commenting thereon, tells us that it was faith on the part of Abel which made him more acceptable to God than his brother, and through this faith he offered a more ample sacrifice than Cain. This would lead us to think that the matter of the offering was of small account, and that regard was only paid to the internal disposition of the offerer,—if Abel's offering had been the fruits, and Cain's the animal sacrifice;—but we cannot so readily sever the matter of the offering from the condition of acceptance, when we find that what was naturally the most unreasonable of the two offerings was yet offered by the better man, and that subsequently this kind of offering had an evident Divine sanction. The supposition of indifference in the matter of the offering, is inconsistent with the fact of animal sacrifices becoming universally prevalent. From this latter fact, the more probable conclusion is that they were commanded, or that from the acceptance of Abel's sacrifice, they were understood to be commanded. In this way, the Scriptural narrative of the sacrifices of the two brothers, may be understood as expressly intended to convey the idea of a Divine institution of animal sacrifice, as the history of Adam and Eve has for its

subjective idea the fall and promised redemption of man. To the supposition of an internal direction and guidance, which amounted to a Divine command, or to what is really the same thing, a law of human nature, Eusebius, in a passage often quoted (from the *Demonstratio Evangelica*), refers the origin of animal sacrifice. I will here quote it at length, as from its importance in this matter it deserves attentive consideration.

“The Hebrew Scriptures teach us that the first race of men, in the very earliest constitution of social life, honoured the Deity with animal sacrifices; for it speaks in manner following :

“‘Now it came to pass after certain days, that Cain brought of the fruit of the earth an offering to the Lord : and Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock. And God had respect to Abel and to his gifts ; but to Cain and to his offerings he had not respect.’

“Here you may learn, that he who sacrificed animals, is declared to be more acceptable than he who brought unto God an offering from the earth. Noah also immediately devoted, of all the clean beasts and of all the clean birds, burnt-offerings upon the altar ; and the Lord smelled a sweet savour. Abraham, moreover, is recorded to have sacrificed. So that, according to the testimony of holy Scripture, animal sacrifice was first of all thought of by the ancient lovers of God.

“But the principle of this I reckon to have been neither *purely accidental* nor a *matter of mere human invention*. I rather deem it to have been suggested *through a Divine contrivance*. For when they saw (inasmuch as they were pious in their manners and

closely conversant with God, and enlightened in their souls by the Divine Spirit) that for the purification of their mortal offences they had need of great service, they thought that to the lord of animal life was justly due a ransom of their salvation. Hence having nothing to devote which was better and more honourable than their own life, instead of this they brought a sacrifice of irrational animals, offering up their lives in place of their own. Now this matter is most clearly indicated by Moses, when he says : *The life of all flesh is in the blood thereof* ; and, *I have given unto you the blood upon the altar, to make atonement for your sins*. Thus distinctly does he teach that the blood of slaughtered animals makes atonement for the life of man. So long, therefore, as the better, and the great, and the God-befitting sacrifice, was not yet present to men, *it was their duty*, by animal sacrifice, to offer unto the Lord a ransom, life for life, of their own life and proper nature.

“Thus also did those ancient lovers of God, having previously *learned through the Divine Spirit*, that a certain venerable and great victim, a victim really acceptable unto God, would at length come to men ; a victim, which should be the purifier of the whole world ; a victim, of which they being prophets, and typically exhibiting what was about to come to pass, rightly appointed animal victims to be symbols. But this was the Christ of God, whose advent among men, and whose sacrificial devotement like a sheep on behalf of the whole human race, were from old time predicted.”

From this it is collected without difficulty, that Eusebius held that the true worshippers under the Patriarchal dispensation were accustomed to devote

animal sacrifices, not through accident, not as a matter of mere human invention, but in consequence of a certain Divine contrivance, which rendered the sacrificer of animals more acceptable to God than one who sacrificed of the fruits of the earth; and that the notion with which they sacrificed was precisely the same as that of the intelligent worshipper under the Mosaic law. Their sacrifices were strictly piacular; it was their duty to offer them, taught by the Divine Spirit, until the better sacrifice should come. So that Eusebius seems to have imagined that whatever was done under the law in the matter of piacular sacrifice was done also by the Patriarchs.

Having learned by Divine communications that the really acceptable victim would hereafter be devoted, and therefore, in this knowledge, being prophets, they rightly appointed animal victims to be types or symbols of that future efficacious and God-befitting victim, who, on behalf of the whole human race, should make a full, sufficient, and satisfactory atonement.

Leaving, however, the argument from authorities, of which many may be quoted on either side, it seems to me that another view of the subject may help us to a conclusion.

As soon as men became aware of the general nature of sin as an offence against God, it seems most rational to suppose they must have had some idea of expiation.

The question is not whether certain acts which natural religion teaches to be offences, such as murder, theft, &c. are offences against what is right, and therefore against the author of right—God—and thus *sins*; but whether general sinfulness was known, as incurring constant guilt, and requiring constant

expiation; whether the habit of carnal longing was known as one producing alienation from God.

If we can perceive that there was consciousness on the part of man of a sinful alienation from God, consciousness of a corrupt nature, this will make us think that the means of being restored to the Divine favour must have been made known. Some men, as Enoch, pleased Him in their generation, and it is impossible that they that are in the flesh should please God. The covenant must have been made dimly known, and some means appointed of a traditional kind to testify to that knowledge and keep it alive.

The opponents of the doctrine of the atonement have not been slow to perceive that it was bound up with the notion—of *sin*, being not an irregular occurrence of offences against a law, but a general disability and taint of human nature. Consequently they have laboured to shew that this is not a reasonable doctrine; and they have much to say of the attributes of the Deity, and of the dignity of human nature, which seems to throw suspicion on the doctrine of human corruption as an inheritance from the first man, and to make it appear contradictory to some universally admitted premises. Now without going at length into the question, it is sufficient for our present purpose to indicate, that in the patriarchal times there is evidence of such a notion of sin being received and understood. When this is done, it will follow that the loss of God's favour must also have been known, and that the promise of future restoration was the object of that faith for which the patriarchs who pleased God were commended.

Under such circumstances, the testifying this faith in God's promises by some external act, would

be a reasonable requirement. And therefore in the absence of direct testimony it is more reasonable to suppose that the practice, in itself incongruous, of animal sacrifice, an act in some measure typifying the great act of redemption of mankind, and subsequently specially ordained to do so, should have been at first appointed generally by divine sanction, and thence universally practised by general tradition—I say, I think this is a more reasonable conclusion, than that it should have occurred spontaneously to man, that the shifting of the acknowledged penalty upon an innocent victim, and shedding its blood, could be pleasing to Him, who ruled and governed all things, and whose are the cattle upon a thousand hills. And of the *reasonableness* of the supposition I may produce Dr Barrow as a witness, who writes thus: “Expiating guilt and appeasing God’s wrath by purgations and sacrifices, is a practice peculiarly unlikely to have proceeded from any other reason than institution<sup>1</sup>.” This is said not from a review of arguments on the case, but *incidentally*, and is therefore the expression of an independent, unbiassed *à priori* judgment on its first aspect. It seems to me to confirm what is generally urged by the advocates of the divine origin of sacrifice, that there is an *à priori* difficulty to be solved by those who take the opposite view, viz. that on merely human grounds animal sacrifice and purgation thereby are *unreasonable*.

On turning to the accounts which the Scriptures afford us of the knowledge mankind had of *sin* in the beginning of the world, we first of all notice the

<sup>1</sup> *Barrow*, Sermon. VIII. Vol. II. p. 111.

*Fall*, in which it is clearly taught that after the fatal act of disobedience, our first parents had a general dread of their Divine Father, a consciousness of something disabling them from confidential approach.

This is the general notion of sin for evidence of which we are in search—producing alienation from God—a terrible conviction of the mind that there is a barrier between God and us.

The consequence of our disobedience is that we are alienated and hostile in our minds, ἐχθρὸς τῇ δαίμονι, by our wicked works, and, in consequence of this affection of the mind, we are awe-struck, and shrink from the contact or presence of the superior Being. His nearness appals us; “*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*” Where there is not this apprehension of an aversion or turning away from us of one we have offended, we readily sue for pardon and forgiveness. The account of the fall goes to shew that with the act of disobedience came this consciousness of alienation.

The prevalence of evil in the first ages of the world, which at length led to the destruction of the generation then existing, shews that the corruption of mankind became general, that evil increased, and that in the human race there was a great change since God had pronounced His works all good.

This change in the nature of man is what is theologically described, as man having become of a sinful nature, from having been innocent.

In asserting that we are disabled and inherit a moral corruption, we only state what we think must be evident to all who reflect on their own case. We are much more *prone* to be indolent, to seek pleasure, to



gratify ourselves, than we are to the opposite virtues of industry and self-denial. From these tendencies, if uncounteracted, springs *vice*. If mankind universally, in the days of Noah—his own family only partially excepted—had fallen into confirmed evil ways, it must be that mankind were more prone to vice than virtue, that their tendency was sinful; sin *ruled* in their members, it was their *law*. The taint had spread, alienation from God was the rule; and thus there was a deep breach between God and man, of which man himself must have been conscious.

This is the state of sin, it is exactly what our Saviour told us in later times: “*He that committeth sin is the slave of sin;*” he is in *bondage*.

Now that such a change should have passed upon man, after God had made him upright, shews that the first act of disobedience could not have been an isolated act. Its consequence was a general *corruption* of human tendencies, one that must have been known and felt, then as now, by all the sons of Adam. We know that the promise of a deliverer was made, and that faith in this promise, trust in God’s faithfulness for the fulfilment of the pledge of restoration and redemption, was the quality which made one man more acceptable than another. We know too that the redemption provided for the human race is said to be by the sacrifice of Christ; that He is called the Lamb “*slain from the foundation of the world;*” which shews that sacrifice (whatever may be its meaning and efficacy) was the pre-ordained means; and therefore since it was settled in the Divine counsels, and the whole scheme of the history of mankind involves the notion of fall and recovery by sacrifice, it seems *less* likely that the idea of sacri-

fice should have arisen spontaneously, *more* likely that it should have been enjoined by direct precept, or that it should have been, by suggestion of the Divine Spirit, put into man's heart. It may be said that this latter supposition is not very different from "a spontaneous springing up in man's heart;" but there is an important difference when we come to consider sacrifice as an *expiation*, as we shall see hereafter; and this is the principal point to be kept in view.

But by a revelation made to the first men by the Holy Spirit of God—we mean that they knew it to be from God—not that every motion of the spirit of man is to be taken as Divine. "*Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be plucked up.*" This was a scion which was to last, which was the expression of the Divine method, to endure as long as the race should endure, and therefore was planted by our Father, and had His Divine authority.

A gift may be made to please Him to whom it is offered simply as an expression of gratitude; it may be in this sense propitiatory, and therefore it would be so far suitable, and might have a spontaneous origin in man's heart; but as *expiatory*, it seems unreasonable. Yet this idea of appeasing a just anger, and the notion of *substitution*, seem to have been common among the heathen; and we ask in vain of the advocates of the human origin of sacrifice for an explanation of this phenomenon.

And this difficulty is aggravated when we remember that *animal* sacrifice was universal. It is harder to understand this (without revelation) than even human sacrifice, for we might perhaps conceive of one human life substituted for another,—but expiation by

the sacrifice of an inferior animal, and, as in Abel's case, by the offering of the most innocent and harmless of creatures, the type of innocence,—this, I confess, is to me a difficulty, which I can only explain satisfactorily by assuming Divine directions to have been given; and then the whole agrees well with the plan of human redemption. One of the ablest advocates of the opinion that there was no Divine command, puts the case entirely on the issue of whether the first sacrifices were *expiatory* or not, and confesses that if *expiatory*, no human mind could have conceived them. And others deny altogether that sacrifices are expiatory. I bring the doctrine of sin to answer these objections. If we believe that sin is an offence against God; that God must have aversion to all evil; that the man who commits sin becomes the slave of sin, and therefore is in rebellion against his Divine Master, the idea of propitiation is natural. If man will return, he must seek to deprecate God's just anger. How shall he do so? No doubt that which secures God's favourable reception of the returning prodigal is the very feeling of helplessness, the change of mind which is involved in the idea of wishing to return. So far unassisted reason leads men. This is the moral requisite, but there is a condition to be fulfilled also, viz. faith, a trust in God, a thorough belief in His mercy, of which the sacrifice is the external exhibition. It was the sacrament, or outward and visible sign of the inward faith of the heart. The object of this faith was our blessed Lord, the deliverer, as one in whom God's abundant mercy was revealed, in whom are reconciled those sayings apparently opposite, that He "*will by no means clear the guilty,*" and that "*He will pardon iniquity, trans-*

gression, and sin." The faith which made sacrifice acceptable, was a determinate persuasion of the mind which was an evidence to man of things as yet unseen, the substance of that which he hoped for, that in some way God would be found both just and merciful; that in some way, in the fulness of time, a remedy should be provided, and mankind redeemed, and God's truth be made manifest even where it seemed impossible that He should reconcile seeming contradictions.

Leaving the further discussion for a future occasion, let us in conclusion dwell on this idea.

The clearness of our perceptions of the necessity of Christ's sacrifice, and the sincerity and earnestness of our private repentance, must depend in great measure on our recognising sin as an offence against God, and on this idea of sin being uppermost and strongest within us. "*How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*" was the safeguard of the patriarch under temptation; and David tells us that the source of all wickedness of open act, is putting away from us the fear of God. With this thought foremost, there can be no hypocritical profession of sinfulness in the congregation, with a self-gratulatory feeling of superior sanctity in the heart. We cannot achieve a true and real repentance without this perception of the deep and yawning gulf which our sins have opened between us and God. To know God, and to know our own sinful selves, is the necessary preliminary to any real contrition of heart; when convinced of His holiness, and our own sin, we may pass through that ordeal which Job confesses: "*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I*

*abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."* And if we fully and honestly thus recognise our helplessness, weakness, worthlessness, it will effectually cure us of uncharitable thoughts of others ; it will make us sympathise with St Paul, when that lion-hearted servant of God could speak of himself as the chief of sinners ; it will enable us to fulfil the Apostolic precept, "*Let each one esteem the other better than himself,*" "*in honour preferring one another ;*" for the knowledge of our own hearts, with the knowledge of the nature of sin, will shew us good reason for a mean opinion of our own merits, for self-abasement and humiliation. "*The heart,*" saith the prophet, "*is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it ?*" Let us then thank God with intelligent gratitude, for the remedy of this "*plague of our own hearts.*"

"*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.*" "*The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*" To understand and sympathise with these announcements, we must also be no strangers to the deep convictions of the Apostle ; we must feel with him the exceeding sinfulness of sin ; we must pray for deliverance from the body of death ; we must struggle, and strive, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to get free. St Paul writes as if he were linked to a dead body, whose loathsomeness he had to endure till set free by the mighty deliverer. We must become sensible of that law within us, that when we would do good, evil is present ; and when in hearty and sincere abhorrence of this evil tendency, we can turn in prayer and supplication to Him who hath loosed the bands of sin, and smitten the

*strong man armed who kept his palace*; then He will deliver us, and we shall in triumphant gratitude confess that One *stronger* than our former Master has wrought His work in us, and we shall appreciate the glorious freedom of the sons of God.

May it please Him to work in all of us according to His mighty power, whereby He is able to subdue even all things unto Himself.

## SERMON II.

THE JUSTICE AND MERCY OF GOD.

---

ISAIAH XLV. 21.

*“A just God, and a Saviour.”*

TO the general statement of the doctrines of sin and of atonement by Christ, which were referred to last Sunday, the following objections are taken :—

From the fact that God is revealed not merely as a God of mercy, but as love itself, it is asserted that this is the pervading and distinguishing feature of the Gospel; and that it is inconsistent with this truth that we should represent God as angry with sinners; that He is merely averse from evil.

When inconsistency with the general tenor of revelation is perceived, exception is taken to the explanation of the nature of sin generally given in the Christian Church. It is urged that what we call *sin*, is merely a man's offence against himself; that God cannot in any way be affected by our doings; that He cannot have aversion towards sinners, though averse to their sins; and therefore properly speaking there can be no offence against Him; that men's sins are only against themselves; that is, they destroy their own happiness; therefore there cannot be any room for propitiation; that all sacrifice

which supposes such an idea, must be either a corruption, or accommodation to man's mistaken views, and that in fact the Jewish sacrifices were such; that the people were so inveterately imbued with the idea from contact with the nations about them, that it was necessary to adopt it into the service of God at mount Sinai, in compliance with their weakness and prejudices.

Issue may be joined on almost every point of this statement:

In the first place, God is not represented to us exclusively as love, but as One in whom all perfections dwell; and when any difficulty is felt about the ordinary phraseology of God's mercy and justice being reconciled in the atonement, the reply is, that this reconciliation means nothing else but that Divine justice has been so far satisfied by the death of Christ, that God is now not only inclined and ready, but by a gracious covenant ratified with men, has bound Himself to grant forgiveness to all, and to be at peace with all, who by faith and sincere repentance will return to Him; that holy Scripture authorises such statements, notwithstanding their apparent anthropomorphism: as St Paul to the Romans declares that God's righteousness is established visibly, shewn forth to men, by the fact that He is just, and at the same time the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

In the second place, it is maintained that God's just anger against impenitent sinners is declared in the Gospel as *clearly* as is His love to all mankind, if not so *frequently*; and the reason of the difference is manifest; because the salvation of souls is the object of the Gospel, and not the driving men to



despair. "*God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*"

Again, it is maintained that sin is represented as an offence against God, and as rendering men unfit for His service, and that this fact of *disability* is one which shews the necessity of a Mediator.

That the sacrifices of the Jewish law were appointed as a concession to the Egyptian propensities of the people, though ably maintained by Spencer, has been as ably controverted by Witsius and others, and is opposed to many facts; as for instance, the Israelites having had, before the law was given, a rite of sacrifice opposed to that of the Egyptians, "*We shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God.*"

Let us to-day assure ourselves of the stability of the first of these doctrines to which we have referred. We are not authorised to take an isolated statement of the New Testament affirming that *God is love*, in order to make it overrule other statements of the Divine perfections. This setting up of particular texts, as the Shibboleth of a system, has been ever one of the most fruitful sources of error. A man vainly persuades himself that he is entrenched within the very words of the Holy Spirit, while he is straining and exalting one statement to an undue authority over others equally stringent and important. We can never too often or too strenuously insist, in answer to such assertions, that it is the *whole* of Scripture which is to guide us; and we ought to resist, with steady confidence, attempts to impose upon us interpretations and doctrines, which proceed only upon one view of the Divine character. God

hath made Himself known to us by many names. We must not forget any of them. Now it is of importance that we should have a clear idea of what we mean by justice as a Divine attribute.

Our first idea of justice is conformity to a law of right; whatever God wills is right; and therefore action in conformity with His own will, would be the idea of the Divine justice in action.

Expressed more at length, Divine justice, *per se*, is the universal rectitude and perfection of the Divine nature, taken absolutely, antecedent to all acts of His will, and all supposition of objects towards which it might operate; and then in *action*, or in respect of its egress and exercise, it is to be viewed as concomitant to some acts of the Divine will assigning it an object; it must then be agreeable to the rule of supreme right and wisdom.

These exercises of Divine justice are twofold: absolutely free, in *words*, as equity and truth; and necessary, in *actions*, that is, in rewarding good actions, and punishing evil actions according to the rule of right and wisdom.

It is this last distinction of justice with which the subject now considered has to do, the vindicatory or punishing justice of God; and the point on which men have differed, is whether this punishing justice is essential to the Divine nature.

The opposing views may, I think, be fairly stated as follows:

Considering God as having by His free-will threatened certain punishments against sin, it is not *necessary* that he should inflict these judgments because He hath threatened them, for there is not the like obligation to perform threatenings as there is to

perform promises. This is familiarly explained thus: By His promise God makes Himself a *debtor* to him to whom He makes the promise; but when He threatens, He is the creditor, and we are debtors to His justice, and He may remit the punishment which He hath threatened.

On the other hand, considering God as loving goodness and hating sin, as governor of the world, and so concerned to preserve good order, to encourage holiness, and discountenance sin—under this consideration, it is essential to Him to punish sin at such times, and under such circumstances, and in such a manner, as it seems best to His wisdom.

In the ordinary theological conclusions of the Church these views are each recognised, and reconciled to each other. The punishments which God has decreed against sin are fully, though vicariously exacted. They are also remitted to the penitent sinner whom God has reconciled to Himself through Christ, on the condition of faith.

It is to be noted that the Scriptural idea of the attribute justice, is entirely in accordance with the theological determination.

Justice taken absolutely and in itself, abstracting from it all human imperfections, simply means perfection without intrinsic imperfection; a virtue not ruling the passions, but directing their operations. Hence, in the Divine decrees, actions, words and works, it presides. There is no exercise of the Divine will or of providence, whether of clemency, anger, mercy, truth or wisdom, but in respect of it God is said to be *just*, and to execute *justice*. By Zechariah He is said to be just and bringing salvation. By Isaiah, in the 51st chapter of his prophecy, God's

righteousness and salvation are over and over again tied to each other indissolubly. St Paul, writing to the Romans, says that God's righteousness is known by the remission of sins; having said just before that His judgment was righteous in inflicting indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil. And the angel of the waters proclaims in the Apocalypse, "*Thou art righteous, O Lord, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of thy saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink.*"

God is just in the exercise of supreme power and dominion. "*Is God unjust who taketh vengeance? God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?*" Unless He were just, how shall He judge the world? Therefore this most righteous judge exercises justice in judging the world, *because* He is just.

*Just*, then, is He said to be in sparing according to His mercy, in punishing according to His wrath: whatsoever He doeth according to the counsel of His will, is done by, and through, and because of His justice. And thus justice universally taken is the highest rectitude of the Divine nature, a power and promptitude of doing all things in a manner befitting His wisdom, goodness, and right.

Now God's vindicatory justice—that by which He punishes the crimes of rational beings, to whom a law has been given according to the rule of right, is the rectitude and perfection of the Divine nature variously exercised.

Is then this vindicatory justice an *essential* attribute of the Divine nature? *i. e.* such that the existence of sin being admitted, God must necessarily

exercise it, because He has a constant and immutable will to punish sin, and therefore acting consistently with His own nature, He cannot do otherwise than punish it? Or is it a free act of Divine will which He may exercise at pleasure?

Considered as an exercise of the rectitude and perfection of the Divine nature, it is impossible to say that it is free. It would be just as erroneous as to say that it was free to God to act not according to truth. Some attributes of God, as His wisdom and power, require no determinate object antecedent to their exercise. These are (as to their exercise) entirely free, and dependent on the mere good pleasure of God only, *antecedently* to the external exercise; but in *action* they are necessary, because God *must act* omnipotently and wisely. Punitive justice, on the other hand, must have a determinate object on which to be exercised; it must have circumstances prepared for it. It is *free* till such are prepared. But when they *are* provided, it must necessarily act according to its own rule, which is not the free act of the Divine will, but a supreme natural intrinsic right of Deity, conjoined with wisdom.

The existence of rational creatures, and their dependence on God being granted, God's justice is *free* in the nature of the penal law promulgated for their direction and constraint, but *necessary* in the promulgation of a law, and in requiring a penalty for disobedience: and God's wisdom determines what that penalty shall be, and how, and when it shall be inflicted.

It ought to be strenuously denied that there is any indifference in the will of God, to inflict punishment, or not to inflict it, on a creature who has

sinned. The Scripture loudly testifies against it ; it is inconsistent with God's sovereignty : though His infinitely wise and infinitely free will is the origin of all things, yet when the creation is supposed, and a law has been given, and rational creatures have sinned, He has then willed a state of things in which it is necessary that justice be exercised ; to deny it is to magnify the difficulty connected with God's permission of evil. But this necessity is *self-imposed*. There is no circumscription of the Divine will, but only the assertion of a fixed determination in the Deity to administer the world in a manner consistent with His rectitude and perfection. The necessary egresses of Divine justice being no more a diminution of the liberty of God than the exercise of any other attributes ; they are the consequences not of an *absolute*, but of a *conditional* necessity ; just as we may say that if God is disposed to reveal anything to man, before such determination He was free ; but having determined, He then must of necessity reveal what is true.

I have said the more on this head because *Socinus* affirms that if he could but get rid of the idea of God's vindicatory justice, he could easily shew that the idea of Christ's satisfaction was a human fiction. It is therefore not without reason that the defenders of this Catholic truth, have insisted on the argument from the intrinsic justice of God, and the congruity of all His acts with that justice. It only remains now that we gather a few testimonies from the New Testament to make good the assertion, that God's love to men is not the exclusive though the more prominent characteristic there held up to us.

I think it unnecessary to shew that this is not the main feature in the description of the Divine character under the Old Testament. The Mosaic economy suggests to us the idea which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has impressed on Christian minds in indelible words: "*Almost all things are by the Law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission.*" It was in the words of the book of Leviticus, "*Blood that made atonement for the soul.*" The same prophets who, in anticipation of the evangelical covenant, began to teach more openly the necessity of inward purity, and the vanity of legal offerings to purify the conscience, also abound in stern denunciation of the enemies of Israel, who symbolise to us the powers and agents of evil hostile to the Church of Christ. "*Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.*" Though the Divine word here is followed by messages of mercy and loving-kindness, which I refrain from further quoting because they must be familiar to all, none can say that the exhibition made of the Divine character is one of unmixed mercifulness; the declarations of justice are unmistakeably clear and awful.

In the New Testament we have St Paul calling on his converts to remember "*the goodness and severity of God,*" a severity not past, but to be expected by those on whom goodness had been shewed, if they would not continue in that goodness. "*Our God is a consuming fire.*" "*We know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will repay, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord will judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*" Does the Apostle here ignore, or endorse the declarations which the older Scriptures have given of the punishing justice of God?

And what does our Saviour Himself say of the final issue of judgment to the ungodly? "*Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*" Does not this 'preparation' speak to us of God's fixed determination to punish sinners for their sin?

And how does He warn us in this life, before that day of wrath is come?

"*Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him.*" "*With what measure ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.*" "*Judge not, that ye be not judged.*"

What does He say of those who would not receive His messengers?

"*Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that city, shake off the dust of your feet.*" "*Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.*"



The assertions throughout the New Testament Scriptures, of a day of judgment and retributive justice, wherein men's deeds shall be the criterion of their inner dispositions, and their sentences be pronounced accordingly, forbid the assertion of an *exclusive* representation of God as a God of mercy.

He is represented to us rather under *every* attribute. In the noble words of the 1st Article :

“There is one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness.”

In His power He hath made us all ; in His wisdom He hath left us a choice of good and evil ; and in His goodness He hath provided a remedy for all those who since the fall would choose the former, whereby they may escape the condemnation of those who follow evil. His power forbids the hope of escape from the just sentence. His wisdom forbids the hope of our pleading in excuse what we know in our hearts to be untrue. These two attributes teach us that He must be just. Then His infinite wisdom and goodness have made a way possible, which with men was impossible ; and His sovereign power has *effected* the mighty work of our redemption.

All these things must we acknowledge. “*God is greatly to be feared in the council of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about Him.*” The just analogy of His perfections must be admitted, and though, blessed be His holy name, ‘He declareth His almighty power most chiefly in shewing mercy and pity,’ we must not so presume upon this condescension to us, as to deny that which we believe to have necessitated the death of the In-

carneate Son of God, or to represent Him as a God ready to pardon sin, keeping out of sight His declaration, "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" Not thus are we commanded; we must warn men of *coming wrath*, and when they are touched by the Spirit of God, and shew themselves conscious of the enormity of *sin*, and of the fearfulness of being separated from God by it for ever, we can then unfold the manifold mercies of God; we are to persuade men, *knowing the terror of the Lord*; and having drawn them to feel the same, we can declare unto them His free grace and mercy, in the forgiveness of their sins.

When men, having entered into the covenant of mercy, have become, by His grace bestowed upon them, children of the covenant, no doubt one of the strongest inducements to a life of faith and holiness is the love of God, because He is then doubly their Father, both by creation and regeneration. But we are more concerned in the present inquiry with the general aspect of the scheme of human redemption towards the whole race, than with its application to individuals; and this remark helps us to explain another point which has been a source of difficulty.

Granted that the Gospel, taken as a whole, is pre-eminently a message of love and mercy to fallen men;—

The supposition of the Atonement amply accounts for this. The corruption of mankind was universal, *all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth*, and men were alienated from God. To a chosen few was vouchsafed a dim forewarning of the means of redemption, and to them a pure and holy law was given to keep in them the knowledge of the true God,

and to be the evidence of the coming Saviour. The purport of the revelation, as far as it went, was that without shedding of blood was no remission of sins. The light was dim, the prospect dark, faith was rare, the times were those of ignorance; but before the new dispensation was proclaimed, the sacrifice of Christ had been accomplished; and then God's Spirit was poured out upon the heralds,—the narrow confines of Judaism were burst open,—the wall of partition thrown down,—and the good tidings preached to all nations.

The sins of the whole world had now been atoned for, the ransom paid, the penalty fully exacted, the demands of God's justice had been satisfied. All this may be affirmed on the supposition of the truth of the atonement: and now God proclaimed Himself, as finding it strictly consistent with His vindictory justice, to offer a free pardon to all who would embrace it. Human nature, by the Incarnation, had been lifted into a new position. Incorporation into Christ by the Holy Spirit, made men pass from the state of helpless sinfulness to the state of salvation. The taint of original corruption, inherited and disabling, was now removed for all who would embrace the Gospel, and it was for them no longer a law, that they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Hence, as this was the gift of God, and the work of His goodness, wisdom and power; as He Himself had removed all the guilt, providing one to bear it who was *able* to bear it, and thus had reconciled the world unto Himself in Christ; the news of this wondrous boon is properly ushered in with the proclamation of God's love and pity. "*God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ*

*died for the ungodly.*" And the wonderful plan of redemption by Christ's humiliation and death, so far transcending all that we could have imagined, demands our acknowledgment of God's love in the most peremptory and overwhelming manner.

The fact that in the New Testament God is revealed to us as love itself, is not in this view of the question at all contradictory of the doctrine that His justice demanded the sacrifice of the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, as a ransom or *ἀντίλυτρον* for the condemned and guilty human race; since this revelation of God arises chiefly out of the consummation of the mystery of godliness on mount Calvary.

*"God so loved the world, that He sent His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."* The announcement of the accomplishment of the work of Christ, is fitly heralded by that of God being the God of love and mercy and compassion, since at such a price and cost He opened unto us the gate of salvation.

There is however to be observed a threefold love of God for man intimated in holy Scripture.

There is a general love to mankind, antecedent to the sending of our Lord; a love of pity or mercy toward those who were lying under condemnation and in distress—called by St Paul the philanthropy of God our Saviour, which appeared in saving us, not by works of righteousness which we had done, but by His mercy.

Secondly, a love consequent upon our Lord's sufferings, and procured by them—by which God is pleased with men, so as to desire all men's salvation, calling all men everywhere to repent—in regard to which our

Lord is called the Saviour of *all* men, and Redeemer of the *world*; and hence St Paul speaks of the "*reconciling by God of the world unto Himself, not imputing their sins*;" and that God, "*having made peace by the blood of the cross, did by Him reconcile all things unto Himself, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.*" This is a love of *reconciliation* or *favour*.

Thirdly, the peculiar love and complacency which God bears to all who sincerely turn and stedfastly adhere to Him, embracing the Gospel, and persisting in obedience to His laws. Hence He is said specially to love these as His friends, His children. And Christ, though the Saviour of all men, is *specially the Saviour of them that believe*.

In the union subsisting between God's saints and Himself, is found verified to the full that assertion of St John, which has been a stumblingblock to many in receiving the doctrine of God's eternal justice. *God is love*, to those who are joined to Him, in whom the seed abideth, who have passed from death unto life, who are born of God, who have overcome the world.

But we have no right to say that God is love to a Nero, or a Herod, or a Judas. It is confounding all the bonds of the Christian faith, all motives and all restraints, if we so make a particular truth to override and obscure others solemn, awful, and severe. Let all stand together, they are not contradictory, they have an analogy which it is our duty to ascertain and observe. We may proclaim to all men God's love for them as His children, created by His sovereign will, maintained in life by His providential oversight; we may tell all men that God

loves them with the love of reconciliation and favour, and would now bring them to Himself; but if idolatrously they reject His love to them as His children, if they wallow in the filth of sensuality, or cling to the riches that perish, or deify their own intellects, and so reject Him from being King over them, are we to believe that He will deny Himself, and justify the ungodly while yet they persist in their sins, and will have none of His counsel, and despise His reproof, honouring them that condemn His authority and mock at His power?

Surely such a supposition is blasphemy; but if in humility and repentance they turn to Him, if they with humble confidence are willing to trust their souls to Him, if they embrace the offer made by the Saviour when He calls the weary and heavy-laden to Himself, and believe in His will to save them, His power to rescue them, His wondrous work for their salvation, then we may proclaim to them the abundance of His love; we may assure them that to them *God is love*, that nothing shall be able to separate them from the love of Christ; and that, reconciled to Him, incorporated into Him, true members of His body spiritual, this attribute of God's love will fill full their hearts. Like one who has been gazing at the sun, they shall see it everywhere. Like one whose ear has been fascinated with heavenly melody, their ears shall resound with its echoes. Their inmost souls shall be penetrated with its Divine manifestations, its mighty influence, its absorbing comprehensiveness; and thus shall they pass into heaven, where, in their transcendent plenitude, all God's perfections shall be effulgent.

I believe that such teaching as this is summed up in the words of Isaiah which we took for the subject of meditation, "*A just God, and a Saviour;*" or in the words of St Paul, "*Just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.*"

May God give us all grace to embrace and ever hold fast their awful yet blessed truth.

## SERMON III.

### CHRIST A SIN-OFFERING.

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2 CORINTHIANS V. 21.

*"He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."*

THE truth that the death of Christ is a vicarious sacrifice, is one which has been exposed at times to the attempts of men who would cloud it with doubts. The substitution of the perfect and sinless Jesus for the human race, to undergo instead of man the whole wrath and displeasure of God, all the penalty due to sin, is the foundation of the ordinary teaching of the Church, and is involved in the interpretation we have received from our fathers in the faith, of the demands of God's justice being satisfied in the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh.

I have chosen the text which has just been read, because it is one on which much has been written, and the explanation of some expressions in it is attended with difficulty. That Christ was made "sin," has been explained by interpreting the word "sin" as "sin-offering," "He was made a sin-offering for us;" and some historical interest attaches to this interpretation. It is adopted by St Augustine in more places than one. In an Epistle to Honoratus: "He was made sin for us, *i. e.* a sacrifice for sins; for under the Law those things which are offered for sins are called sins."



And in a sermon on the eighth chapter of the Romans, more at length:

“God made Christ *sin* for us. He did not say ‘made Him to sin for us,’ but *made Him sin*. If it be an impiety to say that Christ sinned, who would endure that Christ should be *sin*? And yet we cannot contradict the Apostle. What is it then? Give heed, beloved, to a great and deep mystery. Happy will ye be, if ye love it when understood, and when loved attain unto it. Undoubtedly, undoubtedly, Christ our Lord, Jesus our Saviour, our Redeemer, *was made sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in Him*. How? Hear the Law. In the Law, the sacrifices also which are offered for sins were called sins. You have it when the victim for sin was brought; the Law saith, Let the priests lay their hand upon the *sin*, that is, upon the sacrifice for sin. And what else is Christ but a sacrifice for sin? As Christ also, he saith, *hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for an odour of sweetness*. Lo by what *sin* he hath condemned sin; by the sacrifice which He was made for sins, by this hath He condemned sin. This is the law of the Spirit of life, which hath made us free from the law of sin and death.”

There are two Hebrew words each of which is used in the double sense of *sin* and *sin-offering*, as is allowed by all lexicographers, more frequently in the sense of the latter than the former; and one of these, when it undoubtedly has the latter sense of “*sin-offering*,” is translated by the LXX. both by *ἀμαρτία* and by *περὶ ἀμαρτίας*. This is a fact of some importance, as it gives countenance to the proposed translation of the word “*sin*” in the text,

as "sin-offering." As, however, it has been denied that ἁμαρτία ever has this sense in the Greek version of the Old Testament, I will quote two passages from the books of Numbers and Leviticus, where the word ἁμαρτία in the LXX. corresponds to "sin-offering" in our translation, and this will, I think, shew the rashness of the assertion, for these instances are not the result of a long search, but occurring in the very outset of the examination.

In the book of Numbers: "*He shall offer his offering unto the Lord; one lamb of the first year without blemish for a burnt-offering, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish for a sin-offering, and one ram without blemish for peace-offerings.*" This enumeration of the different species of offerings to be made by the Nazarite on the fulfilment of the days of his separation, will shew that the term must be familiarly used for the sin-offering; being produced on an occasion where we have as it were the legal and technical phraseology for a very particular rite.

In the following place the two renderings of the LXX. are used for the same Hebrew word.

"*This is the law of the SIN-OFFERING (ἁμαρτία). In the place where the burnt-offering is killed shall the sin-offering (τὰ περὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας) be killed before the Lord.*" The word translated sin-offering is in Hebrew the same word in both places as in the English version; but the Greek translators have used different terms in different places, with a distinction which here is discernible enough, but which is entirely wanting in the first passage quoted.

The argument that the word translated "sin" cannot be rendered "*sin-offering*" from the usage of the LXX., seems to me to fall to the ground.

Another objection scarcely deserves more attention. It is urged that the close collocation of the words shews that *sin* must be taken in the same sense in the phrases, "*who knew not sin*," and "*He made to be sin*." If it were not on so serious a subject, one might suppose that such arguments were mere trifling. In the words "*who knew no sin*," we can only assign two meanings to the word *sin*; it is either an *act* performed by an intelligent creature in contravention of a known rule, a transgression of a law, in which case it means simply that our Lord never committed any sin, or the abstract, *sin*, denoting the sinful state, in which sense it means that our Lord was an utter stranger by experience to that law of sin which rules in man.

Either meaning is applicable: in substance they do not differ; but the first is the most simple, and therefore to be preferred.

Now how can we say in either sense, that our Lord was made *sin*? A person cannot be made an act, or an abstract idea of quality.

Indeed those who maintain that "*sin*" must be taken in the same sense in both places, abandon their position immediately, and substitute different meanings. It is assumed that "*He made Him to be sin*," means that He was made to be the representative of sin on the cross; in which case, the argument for interpreting the word *sin* by making it the same as in the preceding use of it, completely fails. We cannot suppose that St Paul asserts that He who did not know 'the representative of sin' was made 'the representative of sin.'

When there is a well authenticated meaning assigned, which has the sanction of men in whom the

knowledge of things Divine was pre-eminent, and critics resort to quibbles of this kind to avoid it, they very often deceive themselves; the shades of meaning which they evoke are often undistinguishable, and are utterly unimportant. If we examine what they mean when they say our Lord was made the representative of sin, instead of the sin-offering, it is impossible to detect more than a verbal difference; there is no substantial variation; their meaning is subjectively the same as that assigned by those who understand the word to mean "*sin-offering*," except in an open reference to the ceremonial law.

If our Lord was made the representative of sin, and in that sense suffered on the cross, what is this but the idea conveyed by the word sin-offering? And so far it is admissible; but unfortunately it gives no rational meaning, when contrasted with the word righteousness in the following words, "*That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*," for it cannot be said in any natural and intelligible manner that we are the representatives of the righteousness of God. Undoubtedly, in all such cases, where the diction requires a liberal allowance for its enthusiastic, or emphatic, or antithetic character, it must lead to erroneous views if we force the words into their primary signification, and resolve to adhere only to *that*. We must consider them as meaning something definite, but also something intelligible to all to whom they come. There is a real meaning, which must be found out by taking that signification of the words which, coming nearest to the primitive one, gives the first reasonable sense consistent with the general tenor of the Gospel.

Let us apply this to the latter part of the verse: "*That we might become the righteousness of God.*"

Taken absolutely, "the righteousness of God" is an attribute of the Deity, a quality of the Divine nature. We cannot be this quality or attribute; let us then endeavour to find out the next meaning, according to the usage of the New Testament. In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, "*Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, The just shall live by faith,*"—since the latter clause is to explain the first, we see that the righteousness of God means justification in God's sight, and it is here connected with its concrete, *the just*. Whence we may conclude that the words may stand for those who are justified in the estimation or sight of God, and therefore that the latter words of the text may mean: "That we might be justified in the sight of God in Him."

The same idea may be deduced from a passage in the third chapter of the same Epistle:

*"The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets. Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."*

Here the righteousness of God is explained by the last phrase, "*Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;*" and therefore it means the method of God's justification through Christ.

Several other passages of the Epistles will readily occur to all who reflect on the subject, which tend the same way. It is then fair and just to conclude

the words here may be so understood. There is no need to bring in any forced or unnatural sense for the sake of antithesis. The plain idea is, "that we might become just in the sight of God in Christ," *i. e.* in virtue of our union with Him.

We have then ascertained, without disagreement with any of the more trustworthy critics, that our text means, "*In order that we might be justified in the sight of God in virtue of our union with Christ,*" something was done or assigned to "*Him who knew no sin.*" And this was done or assigned ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, either instead of us, or on our behalf. Either meaning suits the real idea to be evolved from the passage.

If the words will mean, "*was made a sin-offering,*" it matters little whether we read the next words, instead of us, or on our behalf; or if we suppose that such an ἀπαξ λεγόμενον should be avoided, and no such technical meaning be assigned to the word ἁμαρτία, as *sin-offering*, and thus we read, "He was made to represent sin" in the abstract, or "He was accounted a sinner" instead of us, or on our behalf; still the same idea remains of a kind of substitution, or vicarious function of Christ, beneficial to us. Christ was not sin, yet He was made either a sin-offering or a representative of sin on our behalf, or in our stead. It seems to me that we cannot get rid of some idea of vicarious position assigned to our Saviour, one which *per se* He was not called to; that this was on our behalf or in our stead; and that its effect was, that in Him we should be accounted just before God. No reasonable meaning assigned to the words can free them from a notion of this vicarious position assigned to Christ Jesus our Lord. If not a sin-offering—and so the substance of

that ceremonial type—still we get the idea of a substitution of a person for that which he really was *not*. In the words of bishop Bull, “As for our sins Christ has been treated by God as sinner, although really He was free from sin, so we, on account of His righteousness and satisfaction, are treated by God as righteous, although we are not perfectly righteous: our sins are forgiven us on our repentance on account of Christ’s sacrifice, and the right to eternal life is granted to us. So that this passage of the Apostle well confirms the catholic doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ.”

In the ceremony of the day of expiation for the children of Israel, the two kids of the goats offered for the congregation are *together* called the “*sin-offering* :” one, the Lord’s lot, is offered on the altar, and the other sent away into the wilderness, when all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins had been confessed over him by the high priest, and put upon the head of the goat. “*And the goat,*” saith the law, “*shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land of separation.*”

Compare this ceremony with what is prophesied by Isaiah :

*“Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin. He shall bear their iniquities. The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. He bare the sin of many.”*

It is hardly possible to avoid seeing the exact agreement between the two ideas.

The words of Isaiah,

*“He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him;*

*He hath put Him to grief: when thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin," &c.*

seem to be the very same in substance as this brief sentence,

*"Him who knew no sin He hath made a sin-offering."*

So that it will certainly not be inconsistent with the Law and the Prophets, testifying of Christ, if we so understand St Paul under the Gospel as informing his Corinthian converts.

At the risk of being tedious on this point, which seems to me of overwhelming importance, I will remind you of some other places which contain the same idea; for it must not be supposed that conclusions are being built upon single verses, or a singular meaning being forced on an isolated text.

*"Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."*

*"Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many. Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree."*

*"He was delivered for our offences."*

*"He was manifested to take away our sins."*

*"Christ also hath once suffered for us, the just one for those who were unjust."*

*"We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ."*

*"The blood of Christ, who offered Himself to God, shall purge your conscience."*

From all these expressions, *suffering for us, taking away our sins, bearing our sins, putting away sin, being delivered for our offences*, we get the plain and simple idea, that He put away or took away our sins, by bearing them Himself, as the victim typified on whose head they were confessed—our iniquities, the



sins of many, were laid upon Him, and His soul or life was made an offering for sin.

Can we avoid the conclusion, that in all this there is the substitution of a sinless being for the sinful, of the just for the unjust; to undergo a penalty which was not due to Him, but only to the character which He undertook and personated; and so became a curse for us, that we might be justified or reckoned just, not having our trespasses imputed to us?

The Catholic doctrine, says Grotius in his treatise *De Satisfactione Christi*, is that God in His goodness desired to make us happy, but that our sins stood in His way. Christ therefore, by His appointment, and also of His own great love to mankind, voluntarily paid our penalty for us by His death and sufferings, that the demonstration of God's justice might be secured, and we by faith might be liberated from the penalty of death eternal.

And bishop Pearson:

“Christ taking upon Him the nature of man, and offering Himself a sacrifice for sin, giveth that unto God for and instead of the eternal death of man, which is more valuable and acceptable unto God than that death could be, and so maketh a sufficient compensation and full satisfaction for the sins of man: which God accepting, becometh reconciled unto us, and for the punishment which Christ endured taketh off our obligation to eternal punishment.

“The man who violated, by sinning, the law of God, and by that violation offended God, and was thereby obliged to undergo the punishment due unto the sin, and to be inflicted by the wrath of God, is, by the price of the most precious blood of Christ, given and accepted in full compensation and satisfac-

tion for the punishment which was due, restored unto the favour of God, who being thus satisfied, and upon such satisfaction reconciled, is faithful and just to take off all obligation unto punishment from the sinner; and in this act of God consisteth the *forgiveness of sins*."

The idea of a vicarious office assigned to our Lord in the matter of human redemption, is contained also in this very word to *redeem*, to *purchase*, and in the notion of a *ransom*.

Christ Himself told His disciples that He came to give "*His life a ransom for many*." St Paul writing to Timothy: "*Who gave Himself a ransom for all*." To Titus: "*Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity*;" and St Peter, "*Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*."

Before Christ's great work was accomplished we were liable to the wrath and displeasure of Almighty God, under iniquity, in vanity and sin, under a law of sin and alienation, and liable to its consequences. The effect of His passion was to redeem us, through faith in Him: we are no longer exposed to the wrath of God, and His just punishments for sin. Life and immortality are the portion of those who are in Him: whereas they were sinners, now they are reckoned righteous.

When a ransom is paid for those who are in bondage, or condemned criminals are purchased out from a state of liability to death at a certain cost, the ransom, or cost, must be at least equivalent to

the penalty incurred; or at any rate reckoned, paid, and accepted as such.

The penalty to which mankind were liable was death; accordingly Christ gives His life as the ransom. He gave His precious blood as the cost of our redemption. He bought us with a price, and that price was the sacrifice of His own life. He underwent death for every man.

Are not these expressions which import the undergoing that to which we were liable? Is not this the taking of our place? a substitution of the blessed Jesus for the human race?

Sinners liable to death are ransomed from that liability by One who underwent for them the penalty of death; who, by the favour of God to us, *tasted of death for every man*.

Without Him we should be held fast in the slavery of sin, and in danger of eternal death. Now the power of death to hold us is broken, the penalty has been paid, the ransom given, the debt discharged, and we are free.

How? By undergoing that to which we were liable. He became incarnate, that through death He might destroy him that had the delegated power of death, *i. e.* the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

All this was duly prophesied of Him. Men are described by Isaiah (lxi. 1) as being captives and bound in prison, and the work of Christ is to bring the prisoners out of prison, and them that sit in darkness out of their prison-house (xlii. 7). He says to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves (xlix. 9).

And in Zechariah, as we shall read in the church in the ensuing week: "*As for thee, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.*" Here are prisoners, prisoners belonging to the daughter of Zion; for unto them, *i. e.* the Church, he speaks in the ninth verse: "*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation.*" And they are delivered by the blood of the covenant; the blood shed for the remission of sins. When again Isaiah writes, "*The captives of the mighty shall be taken away; the prey of the terrible shall be delivered*"—who shall do this?

"*The Lord, thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob.*"

The cause of this bondage, captivity, imprisonment, is *sin*, in two senses:

*First*, as it is a *debt*, whereof God is the creditor, in which sense Christ has instructed us to pray for forgiveness: "*Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*"

*Secondly*, as it is *rebellion*, by transgression against God, and love of the world; for "*Whosoever will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God.*"

As the Creditor who hath delivered unto every one of us divers talents—which we have misused, or wasted, or lost—God looks upon us as debtors, and calls upon us for an account of our stewardship. And as the great King who hath given laws for a rule of obedience, which we by sin have broken, He looks upon us as rebels, and hath shut up all under disobedience.

From this state Christ redeems us, as it is expressed in these sentences: "*He hath redeemed us*

*from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."* His death was for "*the redemption of transgressions;*" and to "*redeem them that were under the law of the elements of the world:*" and how?

By the eternal Spirit, He offered HIMSELF without spot to God, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of sweetness, a propitiation to His offended justice.

As the high priest offered up sacrifice for the sins of the people (for there is no parallel between the work of Christ and the offering of the high priest for his own sins), but as the high priest offered sacrifice for the sins of the people, so Christ offered up Himself. The Apostle expressly affirms, "*This He did once.*" This offering up sacrifice for the sins of the people which the high priest did continually, offering sacrifices which could not of *themselves* take away sin, this our High Priest did once for all, offering up Himself.

The redemption was accomplished when the sacrifice was offered, and mankind, *i.e.* human nature, was ransomed, having paid the penalty or ransom in the person of the *sinless One*, *made a sin-offering for us.*

Here let us pause, and recall the circumstances which the Church has this day set before us, of the solemn entry of the divine Author of our salvation upon the scene of His final bitter trial. "Only two days of triumph," says bishop Taylor, "are recorded in the history of our Saviour, and those were not untempered with sorrow: the day of His transfiguration, when Moses and Elias spake with Him of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem, and the day of His entrance into

Jerusalem, which was clouded by His melancholy forebodings of the fate of the city where He was come to die." In sadness and sorrow, He wept over the city when He remembered, how God's servants in times past had borne to it a fruitless testimony, how its inhabitants had refused the voice of warning and entreaty sent to them by God's messengers, killing the prophets and stoning them that had been sent unto it, and He knew that the full measure of iniquity was now to be filled up in their final rejection of Himself, the Heir, the beloved Son, whom it might have been supposed they would reverence.

This mingling of triumphant Hosannas and melancholy reflection is one that ought to be congenial to us, one which we should try to understand and realise. A sacrifice was to be completed whose efficacy was infinite. The great day of expiation, in its real and life-giving sense, was coming; the culminating point in the history of mankind was near. The imposing ceremonies of the Temple had prefigured it. A long line of prophets, kings, and priests, had been ordained to usher it in. All these servants of God in ages past may be counted as the acolytes of the Temple; the world was the outer court; the holy of holies was heaven; the victim was being led up to the altar in the midst of the shouts of the people; Christ the Lord was the offering and the celebrant; the blood of the sacrifice was to be poured out upon Mount Calvary; and then the Great High Priest was to enter into heaven, the most holy place, by His own blood, the true blood of purification which alone could make a real atonement for sin, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, satisfaction, and oblation for the sins of the whole world.

To endure for us the penalty due to sin in the hiding of His Father's face, was, for the human nature in Christ, a bitter and severe trial, as we may conclude from that earnest prayer, and solemn appeal, which He made in the sorrowfulness of His soul. Who but He could have known what the "bearing the sins of the world" involved? Who but He could have known what God's utter aversion to sin was?

On the other hand, what a victory was to be won! Sin, Satan, Death were to be vanquished; the world to be redeemed; the new creation to be ushered in. Well might the song of triumph be raised, if men had understood the deep import of the scene, the awfulness of that great day of atonement. The cup of wrath which we should have had to drink, Christ Himself then drained to the uttermost; and instead thereof hath put into our hands the cup of immortality filled with the living water, that a man may drink thereof and not die.

The law of sin which was in our members, and which would have reigned in all the descendants of Adam, bringing death unto all men, was there abrogated, and instead thereof, the law of Christ Jesus is life, and truth, and holiness. "*The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

Let us then join heartily with the multitude who welcomed the Redeemer of mankind, and ushered Him into the scene of His conquest and victory. Let us say from the heart, "*Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna to the Son of David.*"

But let us remember that, in this, as in all other cases, we must not follow a multitude to do evil;

we must not like that fickle crowd be found calling for Barabbas, soon after we have shouted Hosanna. We must not be on the side of Christ to-day, on that of the world the next day; for this would be like changing the scene from the Mount of Olives, to the Judgment Hall of Pilate, and passing from enthusiasm in the cause of Christ Jesus, to a sympathy with His murderers and blasphemers. If we reject Christ's law from our hearts, and will not submit our wills and our passions to His pure and holy rule, we are in effect saying, "*We will not have this man to rule over us;*" we are by our acts calling out, "*Away with Him, away with Him.*" And if we so betray the cause which we have taken up, it were better that we had never had any sympathy with its glorious and exalted aims. "*Woe unto him by whom the Son of man is betrayed.*"

Let us then pray to God to fix deeply in our minds all those impressions which His Holy Spirit creates, when they tend to make us sympathise with Christ's sorrows and triumphs, that they may sink deeper and deeper, and become indelible; that, through our union with Him, we may finally share in the triumph, and according to His promise be made pillars in the Temple of God on high, never to be removed.



## SERMON IV.

### CHRIST, OUR EXAMPLE.

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1 PETER II. 21.

*“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps.”*

IN what I have suggested for your meditations in preceding Sermons, I have endeavoured more especially to direct attention to that view of Christ's sacrifice as it is a ransom from the penalty due by mankind for sins, a satisfaction to the Divine justice; because this is the point which has been called in question, and with respect to which I thought it might, at this time, do good service to recall and put before you some of the opinions, arguments and conclusions of writers generally reckoned as the sound theologians of the Church of England; whose works I always find more full of instruction and sound reasoning than the more popular writers of our own times. I find in the pages of those wise and thoughtful men, a manly straightforwardness, a logical arrangement and a clearness of judgment which attract me, and work in me conviction; I seem to be perusing the perspicuous conclusions of vigorous intellects, arrived at with thoughtful deliberation—the results of years of anxious and methodical study, and not the hasty enthusiastic utterances of men still in the search after truth, whose earnestness and warmth sometimes have too much weight in swaying the judgments of their readers, and who seem to have neglected the wise

advice of the critic, to lay by their writings till they can, themselves, form a more matured opinion on their merits.

In continuation of my subject this day, I feel it is more in unison with the spirit which we wish to witness in ourselves, and promote in those about us, when we commemorate the great events of the close of our Saviour's life on earth, and His resurrection, that we should now attend to that moral and practical lesson which the death of Christ is intended to teach us ; that we should, in conformity with the collect for last Sunday, turn our thoughts to the effect of that sacrifice, as it is our example. "*Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should walk in His steps.*" "*He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*" Those persons who have rejected the idea of Christ being a sacrificial, piacular and vicarious offering for the sins of men, to appease the wrath of God against sinners, and so make way for His love to declare itself in the most extraordinary manner, and in a degree till then unconceived by man, have felt it all the more necessary to dwell on the lesson which Christ's voluntary death taught by way of *example* ; how sacrifice is shewn by it to derive its *moral* effect from the temper and disposition of Him who makes the offering ; how self-sacrifice is the ultimate end to be wrought in us by sacrifices of all kinds recorded in the Sacred Volume.

Now all that is said with respect to what is to be wrought *in us* by sacrifice, we can appropriate and hold fast, while at the same time we believe in a great work done *for us* therein. It does not follow, because we believe that Christian doctrines have a

moral application in all cases, that we are therefore to conclude they have nothing else in them, and that the truths of the mystery of godliness are to be viewed exclusively in one aspect. Let those who do thus conclude, dwell as earnestly and as forcibly as they can on the moral principle involved, for the reformation in man of the Divine image, defaced and all-nigh obliterated since the fall. Let them represent, as energetically as they can, the mighty power there is in the example of Christ to influence the minds of men and their affections. All this we can receive from them with gratitude, and derive from it all the benefit we may; even when we desiderate something further in their teaching, and lament they should cast aside truths which we believe to be the root and substance of Christian teaching, to be of those deep and mysterious things which in ancient times prophets and kings desired to look into, but which now are revealed unto us by the Divine Spirit.

No doubt it is true, that Christ took upon Him our flesh, and suffered death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility and patience. But if this is all there was in Christ's death, then our hopes of salvation must depend upon the degree in which we have followed that example; *our* works, that is, must save us, and how is this consistent with our declaration, that *not* for our own works or deservings are we accounted righteous before God? That our works are the only evidence of the genuineness and sincerity of our faith, is apparent from what we read of the general judgment, but *faith* is *the* work wrought in us by God's Spirit; all that believe shall be saved, not for their faith as the procuring cause, but as the condition; and if any

man ever that he has had this faith, then his works must determine whether the Spirit of God dwelt in him, whether he was led by the Spirit of God, whether he is a son of God, and therefore an inheritor of eternal life, because he is then joined to Christ Jesus our Lord.

Thus the doctrine of man's justification and sanctification, which is revealed to us in Scripture, is intimately connected with and dependent upon the Incarnation—on the assumption by our Lord Jesus Christ of human nature, in His paying in that nature the penalty or ransom, and so delivering human nature from the bondage of sin and its penalties, on His uniting to Himself by regeneration, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, those whom He chooses out of the world, and so incorporating them into Himself as their federal Head,—the Head of the new creation. As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. Naturally, we are born with an inheritance of corrupt tendencies, and their penalty, Death. Spiritually, we are born again in Christ to an inheritance incorruptible; with the grace of God's Spirit imparted to us, to overcome the evil tendency, in order that we may not do the things which we naturally are inclined to do.

The penalty due for sin having been paid, we are free from the bondage of sin, and are brought unto the liberty of the children of God. And Christ, the Pattern-man, is the great exemplar to us of holy life in the regenerate state; so that, as Christians, we are not only delivered from the state of ignorance and corruption, and its consequence—death, in which we are involved as descendants of Adam, but we are introduced into a new state called *Holy*, because we

are bound in it by a new law of *Holiness*; the grace of God is infused into our hearts by the *Holy Spirit*; and the *Holy Jesus* is our great exemplar of sanctity and holy life.

Let us then to-day, when our minds are filled with the details of the consummation of the work of Christ on earth, endeavour to arouse in ourselves some thoughts also of these wonderful events as they are intended to be patterns for us: whereby we may work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, while God by these solemn warnings works in us; let us try to impress upon ourselves, as vividly as possible, what deep and grasping demands Christ's example of humility makes upon us, if we would be His true disciples. And since the moral meaning of the resurrection is that we should walk in newness of life, it will assist us materially in forming a correct estimate of our duty in this particular, that we should now turn our attention to those special points to be observed in our Lord's life and death, which are to promote in us:—

1. Submission to injury inflicted by others.
2. Self-humiliation, in abasing ourselves.
3. Self-abnegation, the surrender of ourselves, absolutely, to the will of God.

With respect to the first. The patient endurance of undeserved injury is, I think, one of the hardest things that men have to achieve: I mean, the bringing ourselves to submit without murmur to unjust reflections, cruel insinuations, and false accusations; and yet what is more plainly and pointedly laid down as our rule?

*“What glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently? but if, when ye do well*

*and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."*

Well did the Apostle know that man required the pattern of Christ before him, to enable him to do this ; and so immediately afterwards he produces the example of our blessed Lord, who endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself; reminding us, that "*Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should walk in His steps; who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.*"

In applying this rule to those whose example, as saints in the Church of God, we study, to see how they fulfilled the noble precepts of the Gospel, we are struck with the fact, that the example of St Paul does not at first seem to be in accordance with the precept.

Our Lord, in meek submission to injurious treatment, listened in silence to the false accusations made before the high priest and the elders. Dumb as a sheep before her shearers, He answered not a word. He *endured* the malignity of His persecutors. St Paul, on the other hand, did not scruple to repel injurious accusations. On one occasion he adroitly availed himself of the difference of opinion among his judges, to throw them into a controversy with each other. Though he wrote to the Corinthians, "*Dare any of you having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?*" and though he reproaches them, that "*brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers;*" yet he himself appealed unto Cæsar, and so called upon one to judge him who was no

member of the Church. When unjustly beaten by the magistrates at Philippi and imprisoned, he did not avail himself of the liberty to depart, but complained of their conduct, and compelled them to make public amends for their hasty severity : *"They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison, and now do they thrust us out privily? nay, verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out."*

When our Lord was accused of setting Himself up as a king, and was represented to Pilate as a mover of sedition against the Roman power; He gave no answer to His accusers: though He did afterwards to Pilate explain that His kingdom was not of this world, and so took from that pusillanimous, and time-serving judge, all pretence that he might have made of the justice of the condemnation. Accused before the Jewish authorities of blasphemy, before Pilate of sedition, He made no reply to His enemies; He submitted, for great ends of world-wide effect, to the injurious and false calumnies. But St Paul's appeal to Cæsar, his throwing confusion amongst his judges, his bold reproof of the magistrates at Philippi for their illegal violence, seem to indicate a different spirit from that which we should have expected in one who preached the Gospel, whose precept is, *"Resist not evil: whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."*

The solution of the apparent inconsistency is an easy one. When the injury or loss is merely personal, we ought to bear it. When the truth of God is involved, or the work of Christ impeded, we ought not to give place; no, not for an instant.

Thus we should suffer ourselves to be defrauded, rather than let it be supposed that covetousness reigns in our breasts. It is in this sense we must understand our Saviour's words, when He bids His disciples offer the other cheek to one that would smite them, lend to one that would borrow of them, and similar precepts. We are not to be attached to things of the life present, not to care much for them, to count all things as dross. And applied to personal inconveniences and sufferings—if these be pain, or sorrow, or loss of property—all these things we are to submit to, when they are unavoidable, with a Christian temper and equanimity, remembering how Christ was ill-treated, and grieved, and suffered every privation. "*If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you,*" is a warning literally true to the first disciples, and only secondarily to us ; but to *both* and to *all the Christian family* a warning that we must expect, and accept without a murmur all the ill-treatment we receive here, when its effect is only *personal*.

But we are not bound to any tame submission when the truths of Religion are at stake, when the honour and glory of God are concerned ; for these we may resist, and ought to resist, and shew ourselves valiant defenders of that which God has committed unto us.

Now no doubt there is great difficulty in a faithful performance of this duty : discrimination is difficult, men often persuade themselves that private wrongs are persecutions for righteousness' sake, when, in truth, they are merely personal : they often strive for their own opinions as if they were the truth of God : they set up idols in their own hearts,



and feed on ashes. All this is a possible danger : and yet the truth remains that in the Gospel we are bid to submit to injurious treatment, to take it patiently when we suffer for well-doing, and we are also bid to contend earnestly for the faith. We have need to be directed by God's Spirit that we may not err. We must pray to our Father in heaven to guide us, that we may not presume we are doing Him service, when we are resisting evil to which we ought to submit ; and that we may not allow the truth to suffer through any false application of the rule of submission to evil ; not retire from the post of honour and give way to the evil one, through indolence, self-love, and cowardice.

But, in the next place, there is more contained in the example of Christ than submission to evil inflicted by others ; we must abase ourselves.

Christ, our example, exhibits to us in this the most wonderful condescension. "*Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor.*" He came down from heaven, where He had the highest glory before the world was, and did not abhor the Virgin's womb. It was a laying aside of glory which we cannot estimate. But its lesson to us is palpable and manifest ; Christ's example to us in this respect is, that whatever we may lawfully lay claim to, is to be laid aside if the will of God so determine. Though He was God, He did not assert His Majesty ; He emptied Himself and laid aside His glory, to take upon Him human nature of the seed of Abraham. Riches, honour, station, we ought to hold cheaply, as this voluntary humiliation warns us. All the advantages and distinctions we may lawfully claim as our own, we must be ready to quit, if we would shew faith

at all like that of the Father of the Faithful, who at the call of God abandoned all and went forth, not knowing whither he went.

Then Christ humbled Himself as a man. He pleased not Himself, He submitted His will to that of the Father, His human will He gave up. "*I seek not,*" said He, "*mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.*" "*I came not to do mine own will.*" And He gives us a striking instance, when He informs His disciples that He could then have had twelve legions of angels to defend Him from the attacks of His enemies, if He had not surrendered His will to that of the Father.

All this was the carrying out of the Divine scheme for man's redemption, in which Christ sets us the noble and wonderful example of a *human will subjugated* to the Divine power, a voluntary self-abasement; one which is to cheer us in the same endeavour, to instruct us, to guide us, and be our beacon. Without it, how could we understand and practise such Apostolic teaching as this? "*Therefore I take PLEASURE in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake.*" Whence this *pleasure*? We can understand *submission*, but *pleasure* in distresses,—how can there be such a feeling, if it were not from the conscious persuasion that we are following in the steps of the blessed Jesus, our pattern and exemplar? St Paul says that he was "*joyful in tribulation,*" that he "*gloried in tribulations.*" Christ bids His followers rejoice when they were persecuted.

Now in such cases to feel *joy*, requires a wonderful struggle with ourselves. We must then wrestle with ourselves, put down our high thoughts, repose

only on Christ, and see in all such difficulties our short-coming in following Him. We ought to recognise in the discipline to which we are subjected, evidence of our requiring it. God's chastisement of us proves that we need chastening, and this is well fitted to abate and put down in us high ideas of ourselves, or to lower us in our own estimation.

Again our Lord tells us, that He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Now it is easy for one puffed up with spiritual pride to call himself *servus servorum*; but to feel it, and be ready to be *subject one to another*, and to *clothe ourselves with humility*; to *prefer one another in honour*; to *submit ourselves one to another in the fear of God*; in *lowliness of mind for each to esteem another better than himself*, which the Apostle himself illustrates by the example of Christ, telling us that *the mind which was in Him* ought to be in us,—all this is a hard thing, and requires that illustrious and blessed pattern to be ever before our eyes. It requires us ever to remember His own words: “*Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*” After washing His disciples' feet, He tells us that He had given an example that we should do as He had done.

In this matter we are enjoined to take the lowest place, *i. e.* to think how unworthy we are, to dwell upon our unworthiness and deficiencies, not to think of others; but set out before our own eyes all our own defects, our sins, our sinful propensities, our own evil thoughts and declensions from what we know to be right, and pure, and good; to keep in mind before ourselves these blemishes, stains, and marks of sin,

that we may see how vast a range the evil one still possesses in us; to let such contemplation humble us, force back all proud promptings, weigh down and crush all pride of heart and self-conceit.

When others pass by us in the race of life, and prosper, and we find ourselves left by them and fancy ourselves neglected, we should recollect that even Christ glorified not Himself, that He was despised and rejected. Though none was ever so worthy as He, how unworthy was He thought! what a struggle with human tendencies, what mastery over temptation in so doing!

Very often these ideas of ours that we are not esteemed as we deserve to be, are only fancies. Perhaps we may not be undervalued; the low value set upon us by others may be our true value. Now the Christian is to persuade himself of this; to form a low estimate of himself, to abase himself in his own estimation; not merely submit meekly to the humiliations inflicted on him by others, but, led by Christ's example, to put humiliation upon himself; call himself to account severely for all high thoughts, magnify to himself his own weaknesses and sins, and diminish to himself his supposed powers and excellences. Not however to do this in such a manner as to make him fall short of all that God may justly require of him; but, while exerting himself to the utmost to find out the full measure of his duty, yet to censure himself really and honestly for all his short comings and failures in his attempts to do good; to reproach himself for the many temptations to which he succumbs, and to hold a tight rein over himself; jealously to watch his soul, and hold it to a strict account. And all this is here said, not only for

the sake of accusing our own sinful tendencies—though this is a necessary and beneficial discipline—but that we should impress upon ourselves a small opinion of our good, and a poor estimate of those things wherein we do well. If a man be wise, that he yet diminish as much as possible his perception of his own wisdom; if he have made some progress in subduing an evil tendency, that he look back upon the beginning, measure keenly the extreme smallness of his progress, take no complacency in the advance, but reflect more on the work which is still to be done; not to count himself to have apprehended, but to forget those things that are behind, and reach forth unto those things that are before; though, like St Paul, he might justly have confidence in the flesh, yet that he count all these things dross, and press on towards the mark for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus.

This is difficult: to glorify ourselves in things where our consciences admit of it, is natural; but it must be forsaken, abandoned, given up, cut down. In this we must learn the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, and be made conformable unto His death; we must make ourselves empty of all, put ourselves under the yoke, drink the cup of humiliation.

Hard and bitter is this! Distasteful, hostile to our wills, demanding a *struggle* and a fierce one, but still to be accomplished in the strength of Him whose death we have so lately commemorated; who, in the wonderful self-humiliation, of which that death was the climax, has put before us an example that we should walk in His steps, up the mountain, bearing the cross, crucifying the flesh, resigning our wills to the will of *One*, with whom is that Spirit of power and

holiness, which shall be vouchsafed to us to enable us to follow Him, if we earnestly and heartily pray to be so strengthened and led forward.

Both the preceding lessons to be derived from Christ our example, of submission to injury and of self-abasement, are included in the third idea, on which we proposed to say a few words, self-denial and self-sacrifice.

The moral lesson of sacrifice is that we must offer OURSELVES to God, and such an effect can only be wrought in us by a *faith*—vivid, clear and settled; such a faith—that whatever God commands we believe it to be *right*, and not only submit without murmuring or misgiving, but in steady and solemn confidence and assurance, knowing that the Divine command is *certainly* and *immutably* just, expedient and wise. Such a faith as this we see in the case of Abraham, called upon to offer up his son Isaac—his only son—whose were the promises—in whom all his hopes of the fulfilment of God's great designs for his posterity were centered: we might indeed imagine that in such a case there would be a great struggle with natural feelings: the command to offer up a child to appease the wrath of Heaven is one that poets have told of in touching strains, the heart-agony has been portrayed by the pens of those who were masters in the art of awakening human sympathy. But we have no need to travel out of the Divine record for the details of a story which we may contrast with that of Abraham's exhibition of the victory of faith.

In the case of the king of Midian, we have an instance of the sacrifice of despair; when Jehoram and Jehoshaphat went out against Moab, and the doomed people of Kir-haraseth were to be delivered up to

their enemies executing God's retributive justice, we read that the whole country was filled with water, coming by way of Edom, without wind or rain. At early dawn the Moabites had risen to attack the camp of the confederate kings, but a lurid crimson haze obscured their vision ; blood in all directions seemed to saturate the soil ; the day of vengeance was come when the land seemed already to reek with the slaughter of mankind. Blood-stained earth glimmered falsely before their eyes, blood-swollen streams seemed to roll before them their awful current. But they saw not yet their own destiny. They thought their enemies had attacked each other, and in imprudent haste rushed forth to the spoil of the camp ; terribly was their mistake rewarded,—the Israelites rose up suddenly and smote them, followed them closely, beat down their cities, destroying the ground with heaps of stones, filling the wells, and cutting down every tree in the country. In this dreadful defeat the Divine vengeance was perceived. When, in dread of extermination, a fruitless attempt was made to break through with seven hundred men, the hopelessness of escape was evident ; now they knew that the reddened sky and earth portended nothing but DESTRUCTION. And then we read the awful account of the sacrifice—the king of Moab took his eldest son, that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him up for a burnt-offering upon the wall. In such a picture as this we see a man in utter despair resorting to a sanguinary rite, which has not been without record in other races beside those of Phœnician and Syrian origin.

But what a wonderful contrast to the peaceful, calm demeanour of Abraham ! We see in him no hesitation, no violent feeling, no struggle, but *faith*—a faith in

God which was probably the most wonderful the world has seen. His belief in the promise was such that St Paul tells us he accounted God was able to raise again Isaac from the dead, to fulfil it literally. He was no enthusiast or visionary; he left indeed his country and went forth at God's bidding, but he pursued steadily his occupation, and appeared to grow rich by the ordinary law of human progress,—by industry and perseverance. He shewed skill and bravery in delivering his brother; he was a man provident and careful, not likely to be led away by fancies and impressions, yet a servant of God most high, trusting in the Divine promises, even when all things seemed to forbid their fulfilment. When God commanded the sacrifice, he went forth with Isaac, nothing doubting. As the story rivets the attention, and rouses many feelings within us, we wonder chiefly at the profound calmness and evenness of character which it displays. We see no symptoms of any fierce contest in his heart, no violence done to rebellious thoughts, nothing of this kind; but a settled conviction of God's truth, a solemn certainty that God's command must be right, that all promised blessings should be given, that God would provide Himself all that He required to make His faithfulness apparent.

Abraham is an example to the Christian of *self* completely laid aside through *faith*. The king of Midian is an example of awful, almost hopeless despair; a fearful exhibition of selfishness, purchasing life by the death of a first-born, offered in a frenzy of superstitious fear. But such wonderful spectacles as these fade and shrink away, when we think of the awful sacrifice of the Son of God on mount Calvary; when we remember that God gave His only-begotten



Son to die for man ; the dignity of the Person, the change from the glory of heaven to the poverty of earth, the agony of the garden, and the death upon the cross, the wondrous love which could give occasion to a sacrifice so precious, for man guilty, sinful, ignorant, degraded : this sacrifice cannot but prompt in those, who meditate upon it, thoughts of the extent of the demands it makes on them. Where shall we learn what self-denial and self-sacrifice mean, but in the pages of the Gospel ? There we may see what surrender of ourselves involves and requires ; and we shall not wonder at those requirements of Christianity, which we are ever ready to fritter down and reduce to nothing, when we rise from the perusal of Christ's life, remembering *how* it tells us of this utter renunciation of selfishness ; of this unbounded submission to the will of God ; this constant consideration of the welfare of others, and annihilation of self-love.

*Then* we cannot be surprised that the Gospel should tell us, that our happiness is to consist in dispositions of the soul crossing our humours, curbing our appetites and quelling our passions ; in the conformity of practice to rules distasteful to the senses ; that the love of all things may sometime be our greatest gain ; being contemned, our highest honour ; enduring afflictions our most desirable condition ; death our surest welfare ; that a cross is to be preferred to a crown.

*Then* we shall no longer find it a hard saying that we are bid to hate our own lives, to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, to renounce all that a man hath, to pluck out the right eye, to cut off the right hand, to circumcise our hearts, to mortify our members, to crucify the flesh, to be crucified unto the

world, to account all things dross for the excellency of Christ.

Precepts such as these are hateful to the natural man, foolishness unto him. With respect to them we are enemies in our minds ; and no teaching will drive them into us, no instruction will convince us of them, but the power of the Divine Spirit—the Spirit of truth. We require, in respect of such doctrine, to have our minds illuminated by the light which can shine out of darkness ; we require an unction from the Holy One ; we want the dark chambers of our hearts to be lighted up by His celestial fire. And one of the great means He employs to work in us this necessary Christian work, is the example of our most blessed Saviour, who left us an example that we should walk in His steps, and be His followers in all lowliness, meekness and submission, in self-abasement and humiliation of ourselves, and in utter renunciation of self-pleasing, so making OURSELVES sacrifices to God—our reason-service.

Lastly, and in conclusion—Death, as coming upon ourselves, should be present to our minds when we meditate on the death of Christ. We cannot be too often setting before ourselves the *end*.

On all sides death is near. The units of human society are ever dropping through from this busy scene. We are like men journeying across a lake thinly frozen over. The slender covering that separates us from the vast gulf is perpetually breaking in, and our friends are disappearing fast,—constantly passing away, they seem to flit before us and they are gone. How often does the firm footing become insecure ! I have often thought, how wise is that warning, which I have read somewhere, to those who

attain any worldly prosperity, who enter upon periods of wealth or station, or are suddenly called unto posts of honour and apparently secure happiness, to be, first of all, thankful to God, and then to sit down quietly and meditate on death; not to acknowledge carelessly the uncertainty of life, but to imagine themselves then on their death-beds, and entertain such thoughts in their minds for a continuance. And at special seasons (when the events of the close of the life of Christ are so prominently put before us) there can be no doubt that it is a subject which justly should claim a considerable share in our thoughts.

The death of Christ was for me. I know that my death is near, that the short sum of life forbids me to entertain any long hopes. I am not my own. Christ has purchased me. Am I ready to deliver myself up, give an account of what I have done with that life and intellect, and health and strength which were allotted to me, to occupy till He comes to demand them back and to require His own with usury? I must *then* resign myself into the hands of God. Shall it then be done for the *first* time? Does not the death of Christ preach to me of self-surrender now? He died that I might live: True; but live *unto Him*. None of us liveth to himself—our body, soul and spirit are His.

When in the gloom of death, our hopes grow faint, and our faith seems to fail,—for though sometimes men have had their intellects clear to the end, it is not unreasonable to suppose that failing strength of body must often bring with it weakness of mind, dimness of apprehension and depression;—if all this should come upon us, then, to have had frequent thoughts of the closing scene on mount Calvary, so

as to be penetrated fully with its details, must be the great stay of the Christian.

When thus, treading the valley of the shadow of death, we can call to mind, that Christ also endured the withdrawal of His Father's face, we may hope that our case was wrapped up in His when He called out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Darkness then covered the land, and the physical gloom was but too symbolical of the mind of the Saviour—nature striving to sympathise with its Author.

We too may hope to hear the words, "*It is finished,*" proclaiming the end of our trial; and then, with upward look, like St Stephen, may we behold *heaven opened* and Him, of whom we lately thought as suffering for us, now standing at the right hand of God, interceding for us, and beckoning us up to the hill in which it hath pleased the Almighty to dwell.

For beyond the grave we have a hope; death is not the *end* of life in its real sense, but only of the life of the body. To-day we are bid to exult in the bursting of the bonds of the king of terrors. And to the Christian who can die with Christ, is given the glorious promise of the resurrection to life eternal. He suffers only an eclipse, and shall pass onward to the higher and more exalted state of existence—into which Christ, his forerunner, is already passed—when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, and the saying that is written shall be brought to pass, "*Death is swallowed up in victory.*"

## SERMON V.

### THE PUNISHMENT OF SIN.

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ST LUKE VI. 38.

*“With the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”*

AN exclusive representation of the Gospel as a covenant of mercy, without at the same time clearly setting forth the fixed determination of God to act with strict justice, has led to results which are to be lamented. The disciplinal part of repentance has been too much kept out of sight, and men have been erroneously taught, that sin pardoned is sin not followed by punishment; whereas there is a very important and solemn lesson to be given to all men from the very contrary doctrine. We are not to suppose that sin is unpunished in this life, when men have repented and turned to God. The seed sown must produce its crop; *“With what measure ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again,”* are words of our Saviour to be remembered as importing something fearful; an assertion of God’s justice from the lips of Him whose office it was to bring tidings of great joy—on earth peace, and good will to man.

One of the most serious dangers to which the partial view of the Divine message gives rise, is *delay of repentance*. Men touched by the word of God, examine their own hearts, and find that there is something to be *altered, corrected, striven against,*

before they can die with a good hope; but they linger. They hear the words of Moses to the children of Israel, "*Be sure your sin will find you out,*" but yet they go on in their present course of indifference, carelessness, worldliness. They think they can repent by and bye, and then all will be forgiven and pass away. They forget that God is proclaimed as a just God; that sin works bitterness, "*That unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.*"

When, therefore, we have preached to all men that their title to eternal life is to be found only in Christ, that He has borne our sins, and that the eternal punishment due to sin unrepented of is done away in Him; we must yet join to this teaching, to prevent its being abused to delay of conversion to God, another most true and necessary warning—one with which the Word of God perpetually rings, namely, that now we are sowing seed which must spring up in future harvest. The habits we are forming, the dispositions we are cherishing, the indolence we encourage, are all *most certain, most certain* to have fruit in this life. True, we may repent and turn to God, and then indeed the Lord shall put away our sins; but there are consequences of sin remaining—there are temptations to be prayed against. The message of the Gospel does not mean that past wickedness when pardoned, is powerless. Men who repent and *persevere* in the grace of God, shall be saved; but then, in proportion to our past acquaintance with sin, will be the *difficulty of persevering* in holiness. As we have erred from truth, from purity, from continence, so will be the struggle hereafter to maintain an upright course.

Let those who hesitate yet to act upon conviction of religious truths ask the Word of God, ask mankind in general, ask all who are wrestling with sin, ask them this question,—whether they find it easy to overcome the world? Let them ask their brethren, if the inroads of sin upon their consciences before they turned to God, are not now sources of bitter lamentation, the paths by which the tempter approaches, the entrances which he finds for his seductions and lures? and I dare affirm, that the voice UNIVERSAL of all who are seeking heaven honestly and with well-grounded hopes, will be against the neglect men shew of this most certain and most important truth—that our past sins hold us, that according to our seed-time, so is our harvest; as we spend our youth, so shall be our manhood; as we spend manhood, so shall be old age.

If impenitent, the age of sin and folly leads to an after age covetous, cruel, hardhearted, selfish and desolate.

If penitent, the age of sin and folly leads to an after age of deep repentance, of earnest bitter striving against sin, of constant liability to evil, of much chastisement from God in this life. Repentance delayed begets, in those who do finally repent, sadness and sorrow, and a difficulty in maintaining integrity.

Sin ever bears its own proper fruit: to shew this from the book of Revelation will be my endeavour to-day, and I will multiply instances from the Sacred Volume that we may impress deeply on ourselves the everlasting truth, that *according as we have done, God will requite us*: that our sins shall meet with temporal punishment, even when the eternal punishment has been otherwise satisfied

and remitted to us: that in all cases God governs the world *now*, by sooner or later requiting sin in this life: and that we shall be punished often in the same kind as our sins have been. All this is according to the saying of Zophar in the book of Job: "*Knowest thou not of old, since man was placed upon the earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment?*" And long after him the wise son of Sirach, "*If there be one stiffnecked among the people, it is marvel if he escape unpunished, for mercy and wrath are with Him, He is mighty to forgive, and to pour out displeasure.*" Thus the history of Adonibezek, in the book of Judges, warns us. This man, with brutal cruelty, had maimed seventy kings, who fed like dogs under his table; we are told, that when the sons of Judah and Simeon had taken him prisoner, and treated him with the same barbarity, he confessed and exclaimed, "*As I have done, so hath God requited me.*" And Solomon tells us, "*Behold the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth; much more the wicked and the sinner.*"

With respect to the utility of the consideration, that God does punish sin with temporal punishment in this life, we observe that it depends on such acknowledged truths as these: that it is extremely difficult to get men to act on threats of future vengeance, *practically*: that we are much more affected by what passes daily around and about us, than we are by the concerns of life to come: that it may, therefore, make some men begin to consider their ways and their consequences, if we set before them the present temporal consequences of sin; that as "*the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,*" they



may, from fearing the present vengeance of His arm, be led to look with greater earnestness on that judgment to come, which at present they disregard. And thus we shall be enforcing the argument of Butler, that if we can discern the beginning of a system of retribution here, it is right to conclude that it will be more fully carried out hereafter, and does afford a presumption that such will be the case, which is a reasonable source of action.

The proof of the proposition is to be sought in the pages of the Bible, and from our own experience : *i.e.* from the way in which God has said that He will govern the world, and from the way in which He actually does govern it.

The sin of our first parents was abundantly punished in this life. Their transgression was the origin and source of all our present ills. When driven out of Eden, in consequence of their disobedience, we read, that besides this deprivation of life eternal, came a number of temporal pains and penalties. Labour and penury on the man ; sorrow, pain and subjection on the woman. And we are told that the same shall certainly be the case as each son of Adam adds to the sum of human wickedness ; there is to be a corresponding increase of the consequences of evil. "*Evil shall hunt the wicked man to overthrow him,*" saith Solomon. And Eliphaz, "*Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity and sow wickedness, reap the same.*" A question long debated between Job and his friends, which had at last this issue, "*I will teach you by the hand of God. This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of oppressors, which they shall receive of the Almighty. If his children are multiplied, it is for the sword:*

*and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread. Those that remain of him shall be buried in death, and his widow shall not weep,*" and so on. According to this testimony of God's word, a man shall most certainly, in some way or other, meet here below with a recompence for his sins: if it be not in his own person, yet in his family, in his posterity, in his connexions.

And the reason of this difference between temporal and eternal punishments, viz. that the former are not always inflicted on the individual, but the latter always are, is obvious. It arises from this: that the temporal punishment of sin is meant as a warning to others, as well as a retribution to the sinner himself, whereas the eternal punishment is the penalty to be paid to Divine justice. Now for example's sake, it is not always requisite that sin should be visited on the offender's person. It may be made clear to others that sin is followed by loss and pain, if a man's family, or his subjects, or his servants are punished. And of this we find examples in the Book of Life, where God hath this end of temporal punishments so much in view, that where men have repented, and thus obtained remission of eternal punishment, yet were expressly told, that for *example's* sake, the temporal was not remitted.

Thus David, when the prophet Nathan reproved him for adultery and murder, repented, and it is said to him, "*The Lord hath put away thy sin,*" nevertheless, adds the Prophet, "*Because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme, the child ALSO which is born unto thee shall surely die:*" the child also, in addition

to all the former plagues and evils put upon him, when God did raise him up enemies out of his own house, and took his wives from him and gave them to his neighbour, and the sword never departed from his house. As this end of punishment is so manifest on the part of God, we should learn what we must do when we see God's hand fall heavily on any open and known sinner; namely, to accomplish in ourselves the end that He has in view, to examine our actions past, to amend our lives, lest a bad, if not a worse thing befall us. And if the example happen unto one of God's own children, as we have heard of David, a man after God's own heart, let us learn to fear and tremble, and say, If such things befall them whom God most loves, what shall become of us if we sin likewise? "*If these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*" "*If God spare not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee.*" Let us recollect that God is to be acknowledged in all these instances of His retributive justice, as it is said in the ninth Psalm, "*The Lord is known by the judgments which He executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands;*" as also the Lord Himself saith in the book of Exodus, "*I will be honoured upon Pharaoh and all his host, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord;*" and therefore the host of the redeemed in heaven exclaim, "*Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.*"

We are next to notice that God often defers and

forbears His punishments. "*With what measure we mete, it SHALL BE measured to us again.*" This is so much the case with God's judgments, that it has at times made men wonder and be dismayed. Thus Asaph says, "*My feet were almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.*" And so Jeremiah complains to God, "*Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments. Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?*" And even the martyred saints cry out from under the altar, "*How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*" And not only do the righteous stumble at God's long-suffering with sinners, but even sinners themselves are hereby quite deceived, not knowing that God's mercy should lead them to repentance: "*They say in their hearts, We shall never be moved, we shall never be in adversity.*" "*Because sentence against evil is not speedily executed,*" they determine to persevere in iniquity.

But we ought not to mistrust the righteous ways of God, nor forestall with our hasty expectations His unsearchable counsels; and to this end we may notice several reasons *why* He delays His judgments. He may forbear for the sake of the godly. Had there been but ten righteous men in Sodom, "*I will not destroy it,*" saith God, "*for ten's sake.*" So in the days of the good king Josiah, God deferred to bring upon the people all the evil that He had decreed, that

Josiah might first be gathered to his fathers in peace, and that his eyes might not see all the evil that was to be brought upon the people. So Isaiah prophesies, "*Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all.*" That is, I will spare a whole cluster of men, even for one or two faithful servants of mine, which I shall find therein. This is one reason why God forbears to punish. It has reference mostly to public judgments and common sins, wherein whole societies are concerned. Another reason of forbearance is, to give time of repentance and amendment. "*The Lord is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*" Our Saviour explained this to the Jews in the parable of the fig tree: "*Three years the husbandman came seeking fruit and finding none, and the fourth year he waited before he cut it down.*" Jonah prophesied at Nineveh, "*Yet FORTY days and Nineveh shall be destroyed.*" This reason of delay has reference to those punishments which deprive men of the means of salvation, and of amendment of life; for such only can God be said to delay, in order that there may be time for repentance. Other punishments than these commonly hasten repentance, since men are more prone to remember and call upon God when they are in affliction and misery than at other times. Another reason may be, that as God only knoweth the times and seasons, so He has in view to inflict punishment then only when it shall produce most good by way of example unto others, when it shall most set forth His own glory.

Lastly, God will sometimes defer judgment in order that the sin may be as conspicuous and manifest to the world as He designs the punishment shall be. Thus He did not punish the wicked inhabitants of Canaan in Abraham's time, but deferred it till the children of Israel came out of Egypt. "*For,*" saith He, "*the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*" "*The Lord hardened Pharaoh that he should not know Him, that His powerful works might be known to the world.*" This last reason then must not be looked for in all God's judgments, but only when He punishes in some extraordinary and signal manner, and for some very manifest and great wickedness.

We are to learn from this delay of punishment for the sake of the righteous, or to give time for repentance, or to make the example conspicuous, and produce the greatest possible warning, that it is not thereby to be concluded He will not punish at all. "*The trial of all things is in the end.*" And, according to the ancient proverb, "We must wait till the end is come before we can pronounce a man happy." We must also learn, as Christians, to be patient and expectant, for as God's children we cannot but bless Him if He forbear on account of some of His chosen ones, and out of compassion to them; we cannot but thank Him if it be to give time for repentance, for, "*Who art thou, O man, that repinest at the mercy of thy God?*" we cannot but praise Him for His wisdom, if He forbear for the present, only that we may be more edified, or His own glory more exalted, or His justice more manifest. But above all we ought to take heed, that God's delay lead us not to be slothful, like that servant who speculated

on his lord's absence, saying, "*My lord delayeth his coming,*" but take heed by that terrible example, and *watch*.

We are now to notice, in the third place, that there is a conformity between the sin and the penalty; that temporal punishments have for the most part, as it were, a stamp put upon them, in which men may read their sins as clearly, as if God spake to them from heaven, "*As ye have measured to others, so shall it be meted to you again.*" The prophet Obadiah threatened Edom in this manner, "*As thou hast done, so shall it be done unto thee.*"

Sometimes sinners suffer the same things that they have done to others. Thus Adonibezek was requited as he had done to the seventy kings whom he had subdued. The prophet Habakkuk thus threatens the Chaldeans, "*Because thou hast spoiled many nations, the remnant of the people shall spoil thee.*" Thus Ezekiel threatened the Edomites, "*As thou didst rejoice in the desolation of Israel, so will I do unto thee. Thou also shalt be desolate.*" Pharaoh commanded all the male infants of Israel to be drowned as soon as they were born, and he and all his army were drowned in the Red Sea. Samuel said to Agag, "*As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women.*" David committed adultery with the wife of Uriah; and his own son Absalom did the like with his wives in the sight of the sun and of all Israel. Jehoram slew all his brethren, the sons of Jehoshaphat; and by the command of God the Aramites, Philistines, and Arabians slew all his sons, except Jehoahaz, the youngest. Jehoiakim killed Uriah the prophet, and would not suffer his body to be

buried, therefore Jeremiah prophesied to him that he should die by the sword, and be buried with the burial of an ass, *i.e.* that his dead body shall be cast out in the face of heaven without the walls of Jerusalem.

Sometimes we are punished in a way that has a strong resemblance only to our sins. The most conspicuous instance of which is that of the Israelites, who when they turned from the true God to worship idols, and serve them, were punished by being given over to serve other lords and kings besides their own. God gave them over to serve other *nations*, when they served *other gods* besides Himself. Thus Jeremiah warns them, "*Like as ye have forsaken me (saith the Lord), and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours.*" And by the voice of Shemaiah the prophet, "*They have humbled themselves, therefore I will not destroy them, but grant them some deliverance..... Nevertheless, they shall be his servants, that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries,*" *i.e.* that they may see and feel the difference.

We are very often also punished in the very things we have used in a sinful manner. Eli indulged his sons, and did not restrain them in their wickedness, and they were both taken away from him by the sword. David boasted in the number of the people, and lost 70000 of them by the plague. Hezekiah sinned in shewing his treasures to the messengers of the king of Babylon, and therefore he was punished by being told that all his treasures and magnificence should be carried away into Babylon.



• In these and many other ways does God seek to work wisdom and repentance within us, by chastising us *according to our sins*, by giving us *here such* warnings and admonitions as may lead us (if we are wise) to search and examine our lives, and see wherein we have offended. And herein we cannot but notice how God's justice and mercy are blended, *sin cannot go unpunished*; but God mercifully punishes us in such a way as will most conduce to that amendment and renovation which He desires to witness in us. He willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live; and His dispensations are with this end and object, to extort from us confession of our sins, to lead us to repentance; that we may say with David, "*It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn Thy testimonies.*"

We need not depend for conviction of this truth only on the ancient records of God's dealings with man. We see the same in instances of common life. The covetous are smitten in their riches; the gnawing care and anxiety, the restlessness and excitement that their riches cause them. "*I have seen,*" saith Solomon, "*riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt;*" and who cannot recall instances of a like kind? The adulterer is visited with his punishment in the blasting of his body, so that he pines away with unsatisfied desires; the profligate and spendthrift with the knowledge of want and poverty; the drunkard with a craving madness that poisons his appetites; and generally all gross sensual wickedness with disease and infirmity. The proud are often punished in the very source of their pride—those who are proud of birth and station, with disgrace in

the eyes of men ; the ambitious with the emptiness of the honours they have attained ; and generally it is most certain that sin, in every form, has a set punishment in this life.

Though it may not be apparent to us that every sinner meets his reward on earth, of this we are assured by almost all moralists, that vice brings with it its own tormentor, according to God's general laws.

The exceptions only become evidence of the general prevalence of their contrary. They are against our expectation, which is sufficient to shew what we are inclined to conclude as to the law of human life.

These things, if well considered, will shew us that it is now most true, and always has been the case in time past, according to the ways of God recorded in His word, that with what measure we mete withal, it is measured to us again ; as we have done, so will God requite us ; He is ever the same, unchangeable ; He governs His creatures according to general uniform laws ; and therefore it behoves all men to be *wise in time*, not waiting till God's wrath is made manifest on their transgressions : they ought to turn and deprecate His anger against their sins ; to try to find acceptance with Him.

That we all have sinned is certain ; we have all this day confessed it ; we have not walked uprightly before God ; we have done the things which we ought not to have done, and have omitted to do what we ought to have done ; we have departed from the just and righteous ways of God. This is the substance of our confession.

What then must we expect?

The text declares that as we have done, so God will requite us. Now can we endure this? Can we endure the thought that God shall depart from us, as we have departed from Him? That He should render to us according to our works? That He should cease to watch over us and preserve us? That He should exact a full and heavy penalty from us for all our transgressions?

Can we endure the thought that our uncharitable judgments of others should be made the rule for the judgment to be passed upon us, according to the saying of St James, "*He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy*"?

That our angry feelings should be brought up against us at God's judgment-seat, according to the saying of our Saviour, "*He that is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment*"?

That our blind obstinacy should meet with requital from God by His shutting His ears to our cries, and His eyes to our wants?

We cannot endure this.

"*If thou, Lord, art extreme to mark what is done amiss,*" if thou wilt mark it, in order to reward us according to our iniquities, "*O Lord, who may abide it?*"

But when we go astray from His laws, we must nevertheless expect and believe, that God will in strict justice visit us with scourges.

What then must we do?

"*There is mercy with Him that He may be feared.*"

When we have confessed that for our evil deeds we

do worthily deserve to be punished ; we may pray that by the comfort of His grace we may mercifully be relieved. In Christ there is mercy with God. The covenant under which we have been placed is the covenant of mercy. There is now a way by which we can return to God, after we have wandered from the straight and narrow road.

*"Christ is the way."*

He opened it out to us by making a sufficient sacrifice for all our sins, by paying a ransom of infinite price to purchase us from the doom, justly impending over us for our transgressions. If we would not then go out of the world, with these sins hanging over us, and ready to accuse and overwhelm us at the judgment-seat, we must avail ourselves of our privileges as the Baptized, and SECURE to ourselves the share that is ours in that great sacrifice.

Other salvation there is none. One only way is there to escape ; *viz.* to be found IN Christ when we die.

Now we *have* been made members of Christ ; we *have* been put under the new covenant ; God *has* striven with us by His Holy Spirit, warring upon the spirit of evil in our hearts. We have not only sinned, as did the heathen, against the voice of nature, calling all things to a perfect obedience : but WE have sinned against the voice of God Himself, speaking in our hearts, in the Church, in every page of the Bible, in the warnings of Christian parents, and Christian ministers. We have sinned, after seeing everywhere a hand uplifted against sin, in face of the banner of the Cross raised to warn us. Every emblem of our holy faith, every Church, every

sabbath-bell, every funeral, every day of sacred rest, has been *an ordinance and a sign* between God and us. At every turn our monitor has met us, the reproof of the godly, the warning of pious books, the great *fact* of Christianity constantly before our eyes; these have been the CONSTANT companions of our days. And yet, our sins have been many and grievous, our indolence and inattention to God's warnings have been often repeated, and are provoking Him to anger; we have erred from the way, and love our sins.

And what, think we, God will do?

Christ the Redeemer still stands as a merciful and compassionate Saviour; entreating, beseeching us to turn from the wretched allurements of sense, from the foolish vanities of this world. He still stretches out His arms to save us. He *still* proffers mercy, pardon, forgiveness; He *still* calls us to return to the house of our Father, our spiritual Zion. He calls us as His wandering sheep back to the fold. He tends us as the decaying straggling branches of the vine. He calls us as His *children*; His ungrateful, undutiful, sinful *children*; but yet His *children*, bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh. He calls us *back*.

But to those who will not heed, we must proclaim the fact. The tenderest love may be alienated; the nearest ties may be severed. Mercy despised, continually at least, may be unattainable.

There is a turning point. Men's iniquities are sometimes said to be full, and the time of mercy is past. Let not that day overtake any of us. Let us *stay, turn, repent, go back*, not on in the way of sin,

looking to this world only for our portion. Bitter is the lot we choose for ourselves, if we grasp at the present and forego the future.

And let no one think that he can go on now, and turn some other day. There are no such words in the Bible as, *To-morrow will I turn to God*. What did our Lord say to that man who wished only to go and bid farewell to his temporal pursuits and engagements? "*No man, having put his hand to the plough, and LOOKING BACK, is fit for the kingdom of God.*"

If a man is moved now with the hope of being some day religious; and yet, for the present, would regret the loss of sinful pleasure, and so defers for a while to act on the higher impulse, he is deceiving himself; he has *no true desire* for heaven. He does not understand the difference between the infinite and eternal GLORY of life in God, and the POVERTY of life carnal. He sets at nought the lesson which this day we have been striving to inculcate: that what we are doing NOW must be the seed of a future crop.

There stands in God's word, in awful distinctness, the sentence,

*"He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption."*

Is this not a just saying?

Shall our unbelief make the word of God of none effect?

Let us in conclusion resume this warning, against the expectation so vainly entertained of freedom from the consequences of sin, by a reference to the history of David, which has already supplied us with several instances of God's just retribution.

In his early youth, bold and brave, endowed with those qualities which most strike men's admiration ; as he grew on, a mighty warrior, the captain of Saul's host, the vanquisher of the Philistines, and the deliverer of his country ; then the victim of Saul's envy and jealousy, driven from the court into the wilderness, yet endeared even to the family of the persecuting monarch by his many graces and virtues ; then the hero of a small band of daring men, who maintained themselves in a lawless, but still attractive manner ; the armed freebooter of the desert ; courageous, active, high-spirited ; yet withal careful to seek God's directions continually ; just to a nicety, as in the case of Abner and others ; with a most scrupulous regard to the sacredness of his royal anointed master, who hated him ; discouraging treachery, cruelty, and wrong ; and acting generally with the fear of God before his eyes.

*Then*, we see him mounted on the throne from which God had cast out the family of Saul ; and *then* comes the sad reverse.

When the neighbouring nations were subdued and made tributary, and the glory of his house was increased, and success attended his arms on all sides, we find him *tempted*, and we read of his lamentable fall. Adultery, cruelty and murder, deceit and ingratitude, crowd fast upon the story.

But David, reproved by the prophet, *repents* : and his sin is forgiven.

What follows ? Has the sin produced no fruits ? Think we that God designed in this example, as some have wickedly dared to hint, that it is easy to obtain forgiveness of sins, or that by repentance,

when sin is *put away*, the fruits and consequences of sin vanish ?

No, indeed. EVERY SACRIFICE MUST BE SALTED WITH SALT. The history of David pardoned is one continued scene of sorrow and trouble. The most atrocious wickedness on the part of his children; their dishonour and death; pestilence among the people; the revolt of his darling son; Israel in rebellion; David driven from his throne, and only brought back again to begin a scene of fresh trouble and anxiety; and finding himself compelled to proclaim Solomon king before his death, to secure some short peace and tranquillity;—all these things crowd upon our notice, when we think of this man after God's own heart. His great and abominable sin never left him; it followed him pertinaciously. His after life was steeped in blood, in sorrow, in anxiety, and so ends his tale. The discipline which God put upon him was according to his sins: as his fall was, so was his reward.

Can we now cherish the fatal belief that present sinful indulgence, present neglect of God, can be without their fruits ?

Can we delude ourselves with the notion that our present sins will be forgotten, that the Saviour's words are not true, and that we shall not have that requital which our sins deserve ? No, brethren, after a long persistence in sin, we may indeed turn to God, because His forbearance, His mercy, His loving-kindness are infinite; but the sacrifice for sin must be partaken of with the bitter herbs of repentance: in proportion to the inroads of sin upon our moral being will be the effort and the struggle to



maintain the freedom which we have once gained. God's mercy and God's justice will be fully justified of all the redeemed. We must drink of the cup that Christ drank of, and be baptized with the baptism wherewith He was baptized. We must be with Him in His temptations, and be partakers of His sufferings, if we are to share in the glory of His resurrection, and ascend with Him to the celestial presence.

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